

A
P R A C T I C A L
D I S C O U R S E
C O N C E R N I N G
D E A T H.

BY
WILLIAM SHERLOCK, D.D.
LATE DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S

L O N D O N:
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EXTRACT

FROM

THE

RECORDS

OF

THE

RECORDS



TO THE WORSHIPFUL THE
MASTERS OF THE BENCH,

And the rest of the

M E M B E R S

OF THE

TWO HONOURABLE SOCIETIES

OF THE

T E M P L E.

MY MUCH HONOURED FRIENDS,

ONE reason of publishing this PLAIN DISCOURSE is, because I cannot now preach to you as formerly I have done, and have no other way left of discharging my duty to you but by making the press supply the place of the pulpit. Part of this you have already heard, and should have heard the rest, had I enjoyed the same liberty still; which GOD restore to me again when he sees fit; if not, HIS WILL be done.

And the only reason of this Dedication is, to make this public and thankful acknowledg-

ment (before I am forced from you, if I must be so unhappy) of your great respects, and many singular favours, to me; which have been always so free and generous, that they never gave time, nor left any room, for me to ask; especially that obliging welcome you gave me at my first coming, I mean, your present of a house; which, besides the conveniences and pleasures of a delightful habitation, has afforded me that which I value much more, the frequent opportunities of your conversation.

Though I am able to make you no better return than thanks, I hope that great Master whom I serve will; and that God would multiply all temporal and spiritual blessings on you, is, and always shall be, the sincere and hearty prayer of,

G E N T L E M E N,

Your most obliged,

and humble Servant,

W. SHERLOCK.

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VERSES to Dr. SHERLOCK,

ON HIS

DISCOURSE CONCERNING DEATH.

FORGIVE the Muse, who, in unhallowed strains,
The saint one moment from his God detains.
For, sure, whate'er you do, where'er you are,
'Tis all but one good work, one constant pray'r.
Forgive her; and intreat that GOD, to whom
Thy favour'd vows with kind acceptance come,
To raise her notes to that sublime degree,
That suits a song of piety and thee.

Wond'rous good man! whose labours may repel
The force of sin, may stop the rage of hell:
Who, like the Baptist, from thy GOD was sent,
The crying voice, to bid the world repent.

Thee Youth shall study; and no more engage
His flatt'ring wishes for uncertain age;
No more, with fruitless care, and cheated strife,
Chace fleeting Pleasure through the maze of life;
Finding the wretched All he here can have
But present food, and but a future grave;
Each, great as Philip's victor son, shall view
This abject world, and, weeping, ask a new.

Decrepit Age shall read thee, and confess
Thy labours can assuage where med'cines cease:
Shall bless thy words, their wounded souls' relief;
The drops that sweeten their last dregs of life;
Shall look to Heav'n, and laugh at all beneath;
Own riches gather'd, trouble; same, a breath;
And life, an ill whose only cure is DEATH.

Thy even thoughts with so much plainness flow,
Their sense untutor'd Infancy may know;
Yet to such height is all that plainness wrought,
Wit may admire, and letter'd Pride be taught.

Easy in words thy style, in sense sublime;
 On its blest steps each age and sex may rise;
 'Tis like the ladder in the patriarch's dream,
 Its foot on earth, its height beyond the skies.
 Diffus'd its virtue, boundless is its pow'r;
 'Tis public health, and universal cure.
 Of heav'nly manna 'tis a second feast,
 A nation's food, and all, to ev'ry taste.

To its last height mad Britain's guilt was rear'd,
 And various deaths for various crimes the fear'd:
 With your kind work her drooping hopes revive,
 You bid her read, repent, adore, and live.
 You wrest the bolt from Heav'n's avenging hand,
 Stop ready Death, and save a sinking land.

O! save us still, still bless us with thy stay;
 O! want thy heav'n till we have learnt the way;
 Refuse to leave thy destin'd charge too soon,
 And for the Church's good defer thy own:
 O! live, and let thy works urge our belief,
 Live to explain thy doctrine by thy life;
 'Till future infancy, baptiz'd by thee,
 Grow ripe in years, and old in piety;
 Till Christians yet unborn be taught to die.

Then, in full age, and hoary holiness,
 Retire, great Teacher, to thy promis'd bliss:
 Untouch'd thy tomb, uninjur'd be thy dust,
 As thy own fame among the future just;
 'Till in last sounds the dreaded trumpet speaks;
 'Till judgment calls, and quicken'd Nature wakes;
 'Till through the utmost earth, and deepest sea,
 Our scatter'd atoms find their destin'd way;
 In haste to clothe their kindred souls again,
 Perfect our state, and build immortal Man:
 Then, fearless, thou, who well sustain'd the fight,
 To paths of joy, and tracks of endless light,
 Lead up all those that heard thee and believ'd;
 'Midst thy own flock, great shepherd, be receiv'd,
 And glad all heav'n with millions thou hast sav'd.

MATT. PRIOR.



PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

DEATH.

HEB. ix. 27.

It is appointed unto all men once to die.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THERE is not a more effectual way to revive the true spirit of Christianity in the world, than seriously to meditate on what we commonly call the Four last THINGS, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell: for it is morally impossible men should live such careless lives, should so wholly devote themselves to this world, and the service of their lusts; should either cast off the fear of God, and all reverence for his laws, or satisfy themselves with some cold and

B

formal devotions, were they possessed with a warm and constant sense of these things. For what manner of men ought we to be, who know that we must shortly die, and come to judgment, and receive according to what we have done in this world, whether it be good or evil, either eternal rewards in the kingdom of heaven, or eternal punishments with the devil and his angels?

That which first presents itself to our thoughts, and shall be the subject of this following Treatise, is **DEATH**; a very terrible thing; the very naming of which is apt to chill our blood and spirits, and to draw a dark veil over all the glories of this life. And yet this is the condition of all mankind; we must as surely die as we were born; *For it is appointed unto all men once to die.* This is not the original-law of our nature: for though man was made of the dust of the earth, and therefore was by nature mortal, (for that which is made of dust is by nature corruptible, and may be dissolved into dust again); yet had he not sinned, he should never have died: he should have been immortal by grace, and therefore had the sacrament of immortality, the Tree of Life, planted in Paradise: but, now, “by man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” *Rom. v. 12.* And thus it is decreed and appointed by God, by an irreversible sentence, “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.”

Now, to improve this meditation to the best advantage, I shall, 1. Consider what death is, and



what wisdom that should teach us. 2. The certainty of our death; that it is appointed unto men once to die. 3. The time of our death; it must be once, but when, we know not. 4. The natural fears and terrors of death, or our natural aversion to it, and how they may be allayed and sweetened.

C H A P. I.

The several notions of Death, and the improvement of them.

1. **W**HAT Death is: And I shall consider three things in it. 1. That it is our leaving this world. 2. Our putting off these earthly bodies. 3. Our entrance into a new and unknown state of life: for, when we die, we do not fall into nothing, or into a profound sleep, into a state of silence and insensibility till the resurrection: but we only change our place and our dwelling: we remove out of this world, and leave our bodies to sleep in the earth till the resurrection; but our souls and spirits still live in an invisible state. I shall not go about to prove these things, but take it for granted that you all believe them; for that we leave this world, and that our bodies rot and putrify in the grave, needs no proof, for we see it with our eyes; and that our souls cannot die, but are by nature immortal, has been the belief of all mankind. The gods which the Heathens worshipped were most of them no other but dead

men; and therefore they did believe that the soul survived the funeral of the body, or they could never have made gods of them: nay, there is such a strong sense of immortality imprinted in our natures, that very few men, how much soever they have debauched their natural sentiments, can wholly deliver themselves from the fears of another world. But we have a more sure word of prophecy than this, since "life and immortality" is brought to light by the gospel." For this is so plainly taught in scripture, that no man who believes that needs any other proof. My business, therefore, shall only be to show you how such thoughts as these should affect our minds; what that wisdom is which the thoughts of death will naturally teach us; how that man ought to live who knows that he must die, and leave his body behind him to rot in the grave, and go himself into a new world of spirits.

S E C T. I.

The first notion of Death, that it is our leaving this world; with the improvement of it.

I. **FIRST**, then, let us consider Death only as our leaving this world; a very delightful place, you'll say, especially when our circumstances are easy and prosperous. Here a man finds whatever he most naturally loves, whatever he takes pleasure in; the supply of all his wants, the gratification of all his senses, whatever an earthly

creature can wish for or desire. The truth is, few men know any other happiness, much less any thing above it. They feel what strikes upon their senses: this they think a real and substantial good; but as for more pure and intellectual joys, they know no more what to make of them than of ghosts and spirits: they account them thin vanishing things, and wonder what men mean who talk so much of them. Nay, good men themselves are apt to be too much pleased with this world while they are easy here; something else is necessary to wean them from it, and to cure their fondness of it, besides the thoughts of dying; which makes the sufferings, and afflictions, and disappointments, of this life so necessary for the best of men. This is one thing which makes the thoughts of death so terrible; men think themselves very well as they are, and most men think they cannot be better, and therefore very few are desirous of a change. Extreme miseries may conquer the love of life, and some few divine souls may long with St Paul to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is best of all: but this world is a beloved place to the generality of mankind, and that makes it a very troublesome thing to leave it: whereas, did we rightly consider this matter, it would rectify our mistakes about these things, and teach us how to value and how to use them. For,

1. If we must leave this world, how valuable soever these things are in themselves, they are not so valuable to us. For, besides the intrinsic worth of things, there is something more required

to engage the affections of wise men; viz. property, and a secure enjoyment. What is not our own we may admire if it be excellent, but cannot dote on; and what is worth having increases or decreases in value proportionably to the length and certainty of its continuance. What we cannot enjoy is nothing to us, how excellent soever it be; and to enjoy it but a little while is next to not enjoying it; for we cannot enjoy it always; and such things cannot be called our own. And this shows us what value we ought to set upon this world, and all things in it; even just so much as upon things that are not our own, and which we cannot keep.

We use, indeed, to call things our own which we have a legal title to, which no man can by law or justice deprive us of; and this is the only property we can have in these things, a property against all other human claims: but nothing which can be taken from us, nothing which we must leave, is properly our own; for, in a strict sense, nothing is our own but what is essential either to our being or to our happiness. Creatures are proprietors of nothing, not so much as of themselves; for we are His who made us, and may unmake us again when he pleases: but yet there are some things proper to our natures, and that is all the natural property we have; but what is thus proper to us we cannot be deprived of, without ceasing to be, or being miserable.

And this proves that the things of this world are not our own, that they are not proper and

peculiar to our natures, though they are necessary to this present state of life. While we live here we want them, but when we leave this world we must live without them, and may be happy without them too. There is a great agreeableness between the things of this world and an earthly nature; they are a great support and comfort to us in this mortal state; and, therefore, while we live in this world we may value the enjoyments of it for the ease and conveniencies of life; but we must neither call this life, nor any enjoyments of it, our own, because they are short and perishing. We are here but as travellers in an inn; it is not our home and country, it is not our portion and inheritance, but a moveable and changeable scene, which is entertaining at present, but cannot last. Let us then consider how we ought to value such things as these: and to make it as plain and self-evident as I can I shall put some easy and familiar cases.

i. Suppose you were travelling through a very delightful country, where you met with all the pleasures and conveniencies of life, but knew that you must not tarry there, but only pass through it: would you think it reasonable to set your affections so much upon it as to make it uneasy to you to leave it? And shall we then grow so fond of this world, which we must only pass through, where we have no abiding city, as to enslave ourselves to the lusts and pleasures of it, and to carry out of this world such a passion for it as shall make us miserable in the next? For though death will separate us from this world, we are not sure

it will cure our earthly passions; we may still find the torment of sensual appetites when all sensual objects are removed. This was all the purgatory fire St Austin could think of, that those who loved this world too much here, though otherwise innocent and virtuous men, should be punished with fruitless desires and hankering after this world in the next; which is a mixed torment of desire and despair. For though, indeed, it is only living in these bodies which betrays the soul to such earthly affections, yet when the impression is once made, and is strong and vigorous, we are not sure that merely putting off these bodies will cure it; as we see age itself in old sinners does not cure the wantonness of desire, when the body is effete and languid: and this I should think were reason enough to convince every man, who considers that he is not to live here always, how much it concerns him not to grow over fond of present things; for to contract an eternal passion for what we cannot always enjoy must needs make us miserable.

2. If then we must not entertain a fondness for those things which we cannot keep, let us, in the next place, consider, how we must use those things which we have but a present and momentary possession of; for use is apt to beget a fondness. Suppose then, again, that in your travels abroad you pass through such a delightful country; what is it that prevents your fondness but only considering that you are not at home, that you must not always see and enjoy what you now do? and therefore, all the fine things you meet with,

you rather look upon as curiosities to be remarked in story, or to be tried by way of experiment, or to be used for present necessity, than as such things which are to be enjoyed, which you know they are not. And did we use the world thus, we should never grow over-fond of it. Those "who marry, would be as though they married not; " and those who weep, as though they wept not; " and those who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those who use this world as not abusing it; because the fashion of this world passeth away." The world itself will not last long, though it will outlast us; but we are to continue here so little a while, that we have no reason to call it our home, or to place our enjoyment in it. It is an old and a good distinction, that some things are only for use, and some things for enjoyment. The first we value only for their use, the second we account our happiness. Now it is certain, that what is transient and momentary can be only for use: for man is a miserable creature, if what is his happiness be not lasting; and a very foolish creature, if he places his happiness in what is not lasting. Now, this should make a vast difference in our affections to things. We cannot blame any man who lets loose his affections upon that which is his happiness; for there neither can, nor ought to be, any bounds set to our desires or enjoyment of our true happiness; but what we account only for use, we have no farther concernment for but only as it is of use to us; and this confines our desires and affections to its use: and were this the measure of our love to

present things, as it ought to be, we could not err, nor entertain any troublesome or vicious passions for them.

As, for instance : what is the natural use of eating and drinking, but to repair the decays of Nature, and preserve our bodies in health and vigour ? Now, as great delicacies and curiosities as there are in Nature, both of food and liquors, if men valued them only for their use, they would never be guilty of excess, nor grow so fond of them, as if they were made only to eat and drink, and to judge of the differences of tastes. To value things for their use is to value them no further than they are useful ; and this is the only value which is due to things which we must leave ; for they can be only for present use : but when we come to place our happiness, as all sensual men do, in things which are designed only for our use, it both makes us extravagant in the use of them, (which often proves a great mischief to us in this world), and creates such an unnatural passion for them as they cannot answer ; which makes them vain and empty, and unsatisfactory while we have them, and fills us with vexation and all the restlessness of a furious passion and appetite when we want them ; as we must do at one time or other, either before, or, to be sure, when we leave this world.

3. Let us suppose again, that in our passage through foreign countries, where we are not to stay long, we should not meet with all those necessities and conveniencies of life which we have at home ; that the country is barren, the way rough and

mountainous, the road infested with thieves and robbers, but without any convenient reception for travellers, the people rude and barbarous, and insolent to strangers; will a wise man be over solicitous about such hardships as these in travelling? Does he not comfort himself, that he is not to stay there; that this will not last long; that these difficulties will only recommend his own country to him, and make him hasten home again, where he shall remember with pleasure what is now uneasy and troublesome.

And is there not as much reason for Christians to bear all the evils, and casualities, and sufferings, of this life with an equal mind, remembering that they are not to stay always here; that this life is but their pilgrimage? They are from home, and therefore must expect the usage which strangers and travellers ordinarily meet with. That they are not to live here always, is a sufficient proof that their happiness does not consist in present things; and, then, if they can make a shift, though it may be it is a hard shift, to pass through this world, the scene will be altered, and they shall find a kinder reception in the next. This is the foundation of contentment in all conditions, and of patience under sufferings, that death, which is not far off, when it removes us out of this world, will remove us from all the sufferings of it: and why should we not bear up with the courage and resolution of travellers in the mean time, when we have home, a peaceful and eternal home, in our prospect?

4. Once more, to conclude this argument:

Suppose a man in his travels through a foreign country should be commanded immediately to leave the country, unless he would forswear ever returning to his own country again; would not a wise man consider, that, if he had not been commanded to leave that country, he did not intend to have stayed long in it; and therefore it would be an unaccountable folly and madness in him to abjure his own country, where his father, and kindred, and inheritance is, only to gratify his curiosity in staying a little longer there? And can we then think it a hard command, (when we know we must shortly die and leave this world, that whether we will or no we cannot stay long in it), to sacrifice our very lives rather than renounce our hopes of heaven and a better life? When we know that we must leave this world, what does it signify to die a little sooner than it may be in the course of Nature we should, to obtain an immortal life; to go to that blessed Jesus who lived in this world for us, and died for us, and is ready to receive us into that blessed place where he is, that we may behold his glory? I am sure it is a very foolish thing for a man who must die to forfeit an immortal life to relieve a mortal and perishing life for some few years.

II. As death, which is our leaving this world, proves that these present things are not the most valuable to us, so it proves that they are not the most valuable things in their own natures: though we were to enjoy them always, it would be but a very mean and imperfect state, in comparison of that better life which is reserved for good men in

the next world. For, 1. It is congruous to the divine Wisdom and Goodness, that the best things should be the most lasting. Wisdom dictates this; for it is no more than to give the preference to those things which are best. The longest continuance gives a natural preference to things; we always value those things most which we shall enjoy the longest; and, therefore, to give the longest duration to the worst things is to set the greatest value on them, and to teach mankind to prefer them before that which is better. What we value most we desire to enjoy longest, and, were it in our power, we would make such things the most lasting; which shows, that it is the natural sense of mankind that the best things deserve to continue longest; and therefore we need not doubt, but that Infinite Wisdom, which made the world, has proportioned the continuance of things to their true worth. And if God has made the best things the most lasting, then the next world, in its own intrinsic nature, is as much better than this world as it will last longer. For this is most agreeable to the divine Goodness too, and God's love to his creatures, that what is their greatest and truest happiness should be most lasting. For if God has made man capable of different degrees and states of happiness, of living in this world and in the next, it is an expression of more perfect goodness (as it is most for the happiness of his creatures) that the most perfect state of happiness should last the longest: for the more perfectly happy we are, the more do we experience the divine goodness; and he is the most perfectly

happy, who has the longest enjoyment of the best things.

2. It seems most agreeable also to the divine Wisdom and Goodness, that, where God makes such a vast change in the state of his creatures, as to remove them from this world to the next, the last state should be the most perfect and happy. I speak now of such creatures as God designs for happiness; for the reason alters where he intends to punish. But where God intends to do good to creatures, it seems a very improper method to translate them from a more perfect and happy to a less happy state. Every abatement of happiness is a degree of punishment, and that which those men are very sensible of who have enjoyed a more perfect happiness: and therefore we may certainly conclude, that God would not remove good men out of this world, were this the happiest place.

Yes, you'll say, death is the punishment of sin, and therefore it is a punishment to be removed out of this world: which spoils that argument, that this world is not the happiest place, because God removes good men out of it: for this is the effect of that curse which was entailed on mankind for the sin of Adam, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."

Now I grant, death, as it signifies a separation of soul and body, and the death of both, which was included in that curse, was a curse and a punishment; but not as it signifies leaving this world, and living in the next. We have some reason to think, that though man should never have died if

he had not sinned, yet he should not always have lived in this world. Human nature was certainly made for greater things than the enjoyments of sense: it is capable of nobler advancements, it is related to heaven, and to the world of spirits; and therefore it seems more likely, that had man continued innocent, and, by the constant exercise of wisdom and virtue, improved his faculties, and raised himself above this body, and grown up into the divine nature and life, after a long and happy life here, he should have been translated into heaven, as Enoch and Elias were, without dying. For had all men continued innocent, and lived to this day, and propagated their kind, this little spot of earth had many ages since been overpeopled, and could not have subsisted, without transplanting some colonies of the most divine and purified souls into the other world.

But, however that be, it is certain that being removed out of this world, and living in heaven, is not the curse; this fallen man had no right to; for he, who by sin had forfeited an earthly paradise, could not thereby gain a title to heaven. "Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" it is the reward of good men, of a well-spent life in this world, of our faith and patience in doing and suffering the will of God; it is our last and final state, where we shall live for ever: and therefore the argument is still good, that this world cannot be the happiest place; for then heaven could not be a reward. Though all men are under the necessity of dying, yet if this world had been the happiest place, God

would have raised good men to have lived again in this world; which he could as easily have done as have translated them to heaven.

Now, if this world be not the happiest place, if present things be not the most valuable, as appears from this very consideration, that we must leave this world, (for to this I must confine my discourse at present), there are several very good uses to be made of this: as, 1. To rectify our notions about present things. 2. To live in expectation of some better things. 3. Not to be over concerned about the shortness of our lives here.

1. To rectify our notions about present things. 'Tis our opinions of things which ruin us: for what mankind account their greatest happiness they must love, and they must love without bounds or measure: and it would go a great way to cure our extravagant fondness and passion for these things, could we persuade ourselves that there is any thing better. But this, I confess, is a very hard thing for most men to do, because present things have much the advantage of what is absent and future. Some who believe another life after this, whatever great things they may talk of the other world, yet do not seem thoroughly persuaded that the next world is a happier state than this; for I think they could not be so fond of this world if they were: and the reason of it is plain, because happiness cannot be so well known as by feeling. Now men feel the pleasures and happiness of this world, but do not feel the happiness of the next; and therefore are apt to think, that that is the greatest happiness

which does most sensibly affect them : but would they but seriously consider things, they might see reason to think otherwise ; that the unknown joys and pleasures of the other world are much greater than any pleasures which they feel here. For let us thus reason with ourselves : I find I am mortal, and must shortly leave this world ; and yet I believe that my soul cannot die as my body does, but shall only be translated to another state : whatever I take pleasure in in this world I must leave behind me, and know not what I shall find in the next ; but, surely, the other world, where I must live for ever, is not worse furnished than this world, which I must so quickly leave. For has God made me immortal, and provided no sorts of pleasures and entertainments for an immortal state, when he has so liberally furnished the short and changeable scene of this life ? I know not, indeed, what the pleasures of the next world are ; but no more did I know what the pleasures of this world were till I came into it ; and, therefore, that is no argument that there are no pleasures there. because I do not yet know them. And if there be any pleasures there, surely they must be greater than what are here, because it is a more lasting state. For can we think that God has emptied all his stores and treasures into this world ? nay, can we think that he has given us the best things first, where we can only just taste them, and leave them behind us ? which is to excite and provoke an appetite which shall be restless and uneasy to eternity. No, surely ! the other world must be infinitely a more happy place

than this, because it will last infinitely longer. The divine Wisdom and Goodness has certainly reserved the best things for eternity: for, as eternal beings are the most perfect, so they must be the most happy too, unless we can separate perfection and happiness. And therefore I cannot but conclude, that there are greater pleasures, that there is a happier state of life than this, because there is a life which lasts for ever.

2. This will naturally teach us to live in expectation of better things, of greater, though unknown and unexperienced pleasures; which, methinks, all men should do who know that there are better things to be had, and that they must go into that state where these better things are to be had. For, can any man be contented with a less degree of happiness, who knows there is greater? This is stupidity and baseness of spirit; an ignoble mind, which is not capable of great hopes. Ambition and covetousness indeed are ill names, but yet they are symptoms of a great and generous soul, and are excellent virtues when directed to the right objects; that is, to such objects as are truly great and excellent; for it is only the meanness of the object which makes them vices. To be ambitious of true honour, of the true glory and perfection of our natures, is the very principle and incentive of virtue; but to be ambitious of titles, of place, of some ceremonious respects, and civil pageantry, is as vain and little as the things are which they court. To be covetous of true and real happiness, to set no bounds nor measures to our desire or pursuit of it, is true greatness of

mind, which will take up with nothing on this side perfection; for God and Nature have set no bounds to our desires of happiness; but as it is in nature so it ought to be in moral agents, every thing grows till it comes to its maturity and perfection. But then covetousness is a vice, when men mistake their object, and are insatiable in their desires of that which is not their happiness; as gold and silver, houses and land: what is more than we want, and more than we can use, cannot be the happiness of a man. And thus it is on the other hand; though humility be a great virtue, as it is opposed to earthly ambitions, as it sets us above the little opinions and courtship of the world, which are such mean things as argue meanness of spirit to stoop to them; yet it is not humility, but sordidness, to be regardless of true honour. Thus, to be contented with our external fortune in this world, whatever it be; to be able to see the greater prosperity and splendour of other men without envy, and without repining at our own meanness, is a great virtue; because these things are not our happiness, but for the use and convenience of this present life; and to be contented with a little of them for present use is an argument that we do not think them our happiness, which is the true excellency of this virtue of contentment: but to be contented, if we may so call it, to want that which is our true happiness, or any degree or portion of it, to be contented never to enjoy the greatest and the best things, is a vice which contradicts the natural desires of happiness; and you may call it what you will,

if you can think of any name bad enough for it. It is the most despicable temper in the world to have no sense of true honour or happiness; or, when we know there are greater and better things, to take up with some low enjoyments.

And therefore, let the thoughts of this ennoble our minds; and since there are better things in the other world, let us use our utmost endeavours to possess ourselves of them: let us live like men who are born for greater things than this world affords; let us endeavour to inform ourselves what the happiness of the next world is, and how we may attain it; and let us use all present things as those who know there are infinitely greater and better things reserved for us in the next world.

3. This should teach us also not to be over concerned for the shortness of our lives. Our lives, indeed, are very short, they fly away like a shadow, and fade like the flowers of the field; and this were a very unsupportable thought, were there either no life after this, or not so happy a life as this. But besides all the other proofs we have of another life, the very shortness of our lives may convince us, that death doth not put an end to our being: for can we imagine that so noble a creature as man is was made for a day? Man, I say, who is big with such immortal designs, full of prospects for future ages, who can look backward and forward, and see eternity without beginning and without end; who was made to contemplate the wonders of Nature and Providence, and to admire and adore his Maker; who is the Lord of this lower world, but has eyes to

look up to heaven, and view all the glories of it, and to pry into that invifible world, which this veil of flefh intercepts the fight of: Man, who is fo long a child, and by fuch flow fteps arrives to the ufe of reafon, and by that time he has got a little knowledge, and is earneftly seeking after more; by that time he knows what it is to be a man, and to what purpofe he ought to live; what God is, and how much he is bound to love and worship him; while he is ennobling his foul with all heavenly qualities and virtues, and copying out the divine image; when the glories of human nature begin to appear, and to fhine in him, that is, when he is moft fit to live, to ferve God and men; then, I fay, either this mortal nature decays, and duft returns to its duft again, or fome violent diftemper or evil accident cuts him off in a vigorous age: and when with great labour and induftry he is become fit to live he muft live no longer. How is it poffible to reconcile this with the wifdom of God, if man perifhes when he dies, if he ceafes to be as foon as he comes to be a man? And therefore we have reafon to believe, that death only tranflates us into another world, where the beginnings of wifdom and virtue here grow up to perfection: and if that be a more happy place than this world, as you have already heard, we have no reafon to quarrel that we live fo little a while here: for, fetting afide the miferies and calamities, the troubles and inconveniences, of this life, which the happieft men are expofed to, (for our experience tells us that there is no complete and unmixed happinefs here); fetting afide that

this world is little else than a scene of misery to a great part of mankind, who struggle with want and poverty, labour under the oppressions of men, or the pains and sicknesses of diseased bodies; yet, if we were as happy as this world could make us, we should have no reason to complain that we must exchange it for a much greater happiness. We now call it death to leave this world; but were we once out of it, and instated in the happiness of the next, we should think it were dying indeed to come into it again. We read of none of the apostles who did so passionately desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, as St Paul; and there was some reason for it; because he had a taste of that happiness, being snatched up into the third heavens. Indeed, could we see the glories of that place, it would make us impatient of living here; and possibly that is one reason why they are concealed from us. But yet reason tells us, that if death translates us to a better place, the shortness of our lives here is an advantage to us, if we take care to spend them well; for we shall be the sooner possessed of a much happier life.

III. From this notion of death, that it is our leaving this world, I observe farther, that this life is only a state of growth and improvement, of trial and probation, for the next. There can be no doubt of this, if we consider what the scripture tells us of it, that we shall be rewarded in the next world as we have behaved ourselves in this; that we shall receive according to what we have done in the body, whether good or evil: which proves that this life is only in order to the next; that our

eternal happiness or misery shall bear proportion to the good or evil which we have done here. And when we only consider, that, after a short continuance here, man must be removed out of this world; if we believe that he does not utterly perish when he dies, but still subsists in another state; we have reason to believe that this life is only a preparation for the next: for why should a man come into this world, and afterwards be removed into another, if this world had no relation nor subordination to the next? Indeed, it is evident that man is an improveable creature, not created at first in the utmost perfection of his nature, nor put into the happiest state he is capable of, but trained up to perfection and happiness by degrees. Adam himself, in a state of innocence, was but upon his good behaviour, was but a probationer for immortality, which he forfeited for his sin; and, as I observed before, it is most probable that had he continued innocent, and refined and exalted his nature by the practice of divine virtues, he should not have lived always in this world, but have been translated into heaven. And I cannot see how it is inconsistent with the wisdom of God to make some creatures in a state of probation: that as the angelical nature was created so pure at first as to be fit to live in heaven, so man, though an earthly yet a reasonable creature, might be in a capacity, by the improvement of his natural powers, of advancing himself thither. As it became the manifold wisdom of God to create the earth as well as the heavens, so it became his wisdom to make man to inhabit this earth; for it was not fitting that

any part of the world should be destitute of reasonable beings to know and adore their Maker, and to ascribe to him the glory of his works. But then, since a reasonable nature is capable of greater improvements than to live always in this world, it became the Divine Goodness to make this world only a state of probation and discipline for the next; that those who, by a long and constant practice of virtue, had spiritualized their natures into a divine purity might ascend into heaven, which is the true centre of all intelligent beings. This seems to be the original intention of God in making man; and then this earthly life was from the beginning but a state of growth and improvement, to make us fit for heaven, though without dying.

But to be sure the scene is much altered now; for Adam by his sin made himself mortal, and corrupted his own nature, and propagated a mortal and corrupt nature to his posterity; and therefore we have no natural right to immortality, nor can we refine our souls into such a divine purity as is fit for heaven by the weakened and corrupted powers of Nature. But what we cannot do, Christ has done for us; he has purchased immortality for us by his death, and quickens and raises us into a new life by his spirit; but since we must die before we are immortal, it is more plain than ever, that this life is only in order to the next, and that the great business we have to do in this world is to prepare ourselves for immortality and glory.

Now, if our life in this world be only in order

to another life, we ought not to expect our complete happiness here; for we are only in the way to it; we must finish the work God has given us to do in this world, and expect our reward in the next; and if our reward cannot be had in this world, we may conclude that there is something much better in the next world than any thing here.

If this life be our time to work in, we should not consult our ease, and softness, and pleasures here; for this is a place of labour and diligence, not of rest: we are travelling to heaven, and must have our eye on our journey's end, and not hunt after pleasures and diversions in the way.

The great end of living in this world is to be happy in the next; and therefore we must wisely improve present things that they may turn to our future account; must "make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations." What concerns a better life must take up most of our thoughts and care; and whatever endangers our future happiness must be rejected, with all its charms. It would not be worth the while to live some years here, were we not to live for ever; and therefore it becomes a wise man, who remembers that he must shortly leave this world, to make his present life wholly subservient to his future happiness.

S E C T. II.

The second notion of Death, that it is our putting off these bodies.

II. **L**ET us now consider Death as it is our putting off these bodies; for this is the proper notion of death, the separation of soul and body, that the body returns to dust, the soul or spirit unto God who gave it. When we die we do not cease to be, nor cease to live, but only cease to live in these earthly bodies: the vital union between soul and body is to be dissolved; we are no longer enclloistered in a tabernacle of flesh; we no longer feel the impressions of it; neither the pains nor pleasures of the body can affect us; it can charm, it can tempt, no longer. This needs no proof, but very well deserves our most serious meditation.

For, 1. This teaches us the difference and distinction between soul and body, which men, who are sunk into flesh and sense, are apt to forget; nay, to lose the very notion and belief of it: all their delights are fleshly, they know no other pleasures but what their five senses furnish them with; they cannot raise their thoughts above this body, nor entertain any noble designs, and therefore they imagine that they are nothing but flesh and blood, a little organized and animated clay; and it is no great wonder that man, who feel the

workings and motions of no higher principle of life in them but flesh and sense, should imagine that they are nothing but flesh themselves. Though, methinks, when we see the senseless and putrifying remains of a brave man before us, it is hard to conceive that this is all of him; that this is the thing which some few hours ago could reason and discourse, was fit to govern a kingdom, or to instruct mankind; could despise flesh and sense, and govern all his bodily appetites and inclinations, and was adorned with all divine graces and virtues; was the glory and pride of the age: and is this dead carcase, which we now see, the whole of him? or was there a more divine inhabitant, which animated this earthly machine, which gave life, and beauty, and motion to it, but is now removed?

To be sure, those who believe that death does not put an end to their being, but only removes them out of this body, which rots in the grave while their souls survive, live, and act, and may be happy in a separate state, should carefully consider this distinction betwixt soul and body, which would teach them a most divine and heavenly wisdom.

For, when we consider, that we consist of soul and body, which are the two distinct parts of man, this will teach us to take care of both. For can any man, who believes he has a soul, be concerned only for his body? A compound creature cannot be happy unless both parts of him enjoy their proper pleasures. He who enjoys only the pleasures of the body is never the happier for having

a human and reasonable soul : the soul of a beast would have done as well, and, it may be, better ; for brute creatures relish bodily pleasures as much, and, it may be, more than men do ; and reason is very troublesome to those men who resolve to live like brutes ; for it makes them ashamed and afraid, which, in many cases, hinders, or, at least, allays, their pleasures. And why should not a man desire the full and entire happiness of a man ? why should he despise any part of himself, and that, as you shall hear presently, the best part too ? And therefore, at least, we ought to take as much care of our souls as of our bodies. Do we adorn our bodies that we may be fit to be seen and to converse with men, and may receive those respects which are due to our quality and good fortune ? and shall not we adorn our souls too with those Christian graces which make us lovely in the sight of God and men ? the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price ; which St Peter especially recommends to Christian women, as a more valuable ornament than the outward adorning of “ plaiting the hair, or wearing gold, or putting on apparel,” 1 *Pet.* iii. 3, 4. ; the ornaments of wisdom and prudence, of well-governed passions, of goodness and charity, which give a grace and beauty to all our actions, and such a pleasing and charming air to our very countenance, as the most natural beauty, or artificial washes and paints, can never imitate.

Are we careful to preserve our bodies from any hurt, from pains and sickness, from burning fevers

or the racking gout or stone; and shall we not be as careful of the ease of the mind too? to quiet and calm those passions, which, when they grow outrageous, are less tolerable than all natural or artificial tortures; to moderate those desires which rage like hunger and thirst, those fears which convulse the mind with trembling and paralytic motions, those furious tempests of anger, revenge, and envy, which ruffle our minds, and fill us with vexation, restlessness, and confusion of thoughts; especially those guilty reflections upon ourselves, that worm in the conscience, which gnaws the soul, and torments us with shame, and remorse, and dreadful expectations of an avenger? These are the sicknesses and distempers of the soul; these are pains indeed; more sharp, and pungent, and killing pains, than our bodies are capable of. "The spirit of a man can bear his infirmity:" natural courage, or the powers of reason, or the comforts of religion, can support us under all our sufferings; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" And therefore a man who loves ease should, in the first place, take care of the ease of his mind, for that will make all other sufferings easy; but nothing can support a man whose mind is wounded.

Are we fond of bodily pleasures? are we ready to purchase them at any rate? And if we be men, why should we despise the pleasures of the mind? if we have souls, why should we not reap the benefit and the pleasures of them? Do you think there are no pleasures proper to the soul? have we souls that are good for nothing? or of no use to us but only to relish the pleasures of the body?

Ask those who have tried what the pleasures of wisdom and knowledge are, which do as much excel the pleasures of seeing as truth is more beautiful and glorious than the sun; ask them what a pleasure it is to know God, the greatest and best Being, and the brightest object of our minds; to contemplate his wisdom, and goodness, and power, in the works of creation and providence; to be swallowed up in that stupendous mystery of love the redemption of sinners by the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God? ask them what the pleasures of innocence and virtue are; what the feast of a good conscience means; which is the greatest happiness, to give or to receive; what the joys even of sufferings and persecutions, of want and poverty, and reproach, are for the sake of Christ? ask a devout soul, what transports and ravishment of spirit he feels when he is upon his knees, when with St Paul he is even snatched up into the third heavens, filled with God, overflowing with praises and divine joys? And does it not then become a man, who has a reasonable soul, to seek after these rational, these manly, these divine pleasures, the pleasures of the mind and spirit, which are proper and peculiar to a reasonable creature? Let him do this, and then let him enjoy the pleasures of the body as much as he can, which will be very insipid and tasteless, when his soul is ravished with more noble delights.

In a word: If we are so careful to preserve the life of our bodies, which we know must die, and rot and putrify in the grave, methinks we should not be less careful to preserve the life of our souls,

which is the only immortal part of us. For though our souls cannot die as our bodies do, yet they may be miserable, and that is called eternal death, where the worm never dieth, and the fire never goeth out. For to be always miserable is infinitely worse than not to be at all; and therefore is the most formidable death. And if we are so unwilling to part with these mortal bodies, we ought in reason to be much more afraid to lose our souls.

2. That death is our putting off these bodies, teaches us, that the soul is the only principle of life and sensation. The body cannot live without the soul; but as soon as it is parted from it it loses all sense and motion, and returns to its original dust: but the soul can and does live without the body, and therefore there is the principle of life. This may be thought a very common and obvious observation; and, indeed, so it is; but the consequences of this are not so commonly observed; and yet are of great use and moment.

For, (1.) This shows us, that the soul is the best part of us; that the soul indeed is the man; because it is the only seat of life, and knowledge, and all sensations: for a man is a living, reasonable, and understanding being; and therefore a living, reasonable soul (not an earthly body, which hath no life or sense but what it derives from the soul) must be the man. Hence in scripture *soul* so frequently signifies the man. Thus we read of the souls that were born to Jacob, and the souls that came with him into Egypt, *Gen.* xlv. that is, his sons. And soul signifies ourselves: "A friend which is as thy own soul;" that is, as dear

to us as ourselves, *Deut. xiii. 6.*; "And Jonathan loved David as his own soul;" that is, as himself, 1 *Sam. xviii. 3.* For, in propriety of speech, the body has no sense at all, but the soul lives in the body, and feels all the motions and impressions of it; so that it is the soul only that is capable of happiness or misery; of pain or pleasure: and therefore it is the only concernment of a wise man to take care of his own soul; as our Saviour tells us, "What shall it profit a man, though he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" *Matt. xvi. 26.* The reason of which is easily apprehended, when we remember that the soul only is capable of happiness or misery; that it is the soul which must enjoy every thing else. And what can the whole world then signify to him who has no soul to enjoy it; whose soul is condemned to endless and eternal miseries? Such a miserable soul is as incapable of enjoying the world, or any thing in it, as if it had lost its being.

(2.) Hence we learn the true notion of bodily pleasures, that they are such pleasures as the soul feels by its union to the body; for it is not the body that feels the pleasure but the soul, though the body be the instrument of them. And therefore, how fond soever we are of them, we may certainly conclude, that bodily pleasures are the meanest pleasures of human nature; because the union to these earthly bodies is the meanest and most despicable state of reasonable souls. These are not its proper and genuine pleasures which must result from

its own nature and powers ; but are only external impressions, the light and superficial touches of matter : and it would be very absurd to conceive that the soul, which is the only subject of pleasure, should have no pleasure of its own, but borrow its whole happiness from its affinity and alliance to matter ; or that its greatest pleasures should be owing to external impressions, not to the acting of its own natural faculties and powers ; which may convince us, as I observed before, that the pleasures of the mind are much the greatest and noblest pleasures of the man : and he who would be truly happy, must seek for it, not in bodily entertainments, but in the improvements and exercises of reason and religion.

(3.) Hence we learn also, that the body was made for the soul, not the soul for the body ; as that which in itself has no life and sense is made for the use of that which has. The body is only a convenient habitation for the soul in this world, an instrument of action, and a trial and exercise of virtue : but the soul is to use the body, and to govern it, to taste its pleasures, and to set bounds to them ; to make the body serviceable to the ends and purposes of reason and virtue, not to subject reason to passion and sense. If the body was made for the use of the soul, it was never intended the soul should wholly conform itself to it, and, by its sympathy with corporeal passions, transform itself into a sensual and brutish nature. Such degenerate creatures are those who live only to serve the body ; who value nothing else, and seek for nothing else, but how to gratify their appetites

and lusts; which is to invert the order of Nature, to fall in love with their slaves, and change fortunes and shackles with them. So that our Saviour might well say, "He that committeth sin is the "servant of sin;" for this is a vile and unnatural subjection to serve the body, which was made to serve the soul: such men shall receive the reward of slaves, to be turned out of God's family, and not to inherit with sons and freemen; as our Saviour adds, "The servant abideth not in the house "for ever, but the son abideth for ever. If the "Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be "free indeed," *John* viii. 31, 32.

3. That death, which is our leaving this world, is nothing else but our putting off these bodies, teaches us, that it is only our union to these bodies which intercepts the sight of the other world; the other world is not at such a distance from us as we imagine: the throne of God, indeed, is at a great remove from this earth, above the third heavens, where he displays his glory to those blessed spirits which encompass his throne; but as soon as we step out of these bodies we step into the other world, (for there is the same heaven and earth still), as a new state of life. To live in these bodies, is to live in this world: to live out of them, is to remove into the next. For while our souls are confined to these bodies, and can look only through these material casements, nothing but what is material can affect us, nay, nothing but what is gross, that can reflect light, and convey the shapes and colours of things with it to the eye. So that, though within this visible world there be

a more glorious scene of things than what appears to us, we perceive nothing at all of it; for this veil of flesh parts the visible and invisible world. But when we put off these bodies, there are new and surprising wonders present themselves to our view; when these material spectacles are taken off, the soul with its own naked eyes sees what was invisible before; and then we are in the other world when we can see it, and converse with it. Thus St Paul tells us, that "when we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; but when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 6, 8. And, methinks, this is enough to cure us of our fondness for these bodies, unless we think it more desirable to be confined to a prison, and to look through a grate all our lives, which gives us but a very narrow prospect, and that none of the best neither, than to be set at liberty to view all the glories of the world. What would we give now for the least glimpse of that invisible world, which the first step we take out of these bodies will present us with? There are such things "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Death opens our eyes, enlarges our prospect, presents us with a new and more glorious world, which we can never see while we are shut up in flesh; which should make us as willing to part with this veil as to take the film off our eyes which hinders our sight.

4. If we must put off these bodies, methinks we should not much glory nor pride ourselves in

them, nor spend too much of our time about them: for why should that be our pride, why should that be our business, which we must shortly part with? And yet, as for pride, these mortal corruptible bodies, and what relates to them, administer most to the occasions of it.

Some men glory in their birth, and in their descent from noble ancestors and ancient families: which, beside the vanity of it, if we trace our pedigree to their original, 'tis certain that all our families are equally ancient and equally noble, for we descend all from Adam; and in such a long descent as this no man can tell whether there have not been beggars and princes in those which are the noblest and meanest families now: yet, I say, what is all this but to pride ourselves in our bodies, and our own descent? unless men think that their souls are derived from their parents too. Indeed our birth is so very ignoble, whatever our ancestors are, or however it may be dissembled with some pompous circumstances, that no man has any reason to glory in it; for the greatest prince is born like the wild ass's colt. Others glory in their external beauty: which, how great and charming soever it be, is but the beauty of the body, which, if it be spared by sickness and old age, must perish in the grave. Death will spoil those features and colours which are now admired; and, after a short time, there will be no distinction between this beautiful body and common dust. Others are guilty of greater vanity than this, and what Nature has denied they supply by art; they adorn their bodies with richer attire,

and many times such bodies as will not be adorned; and then they glory in their borrowed feathers: but what a sorry beauty is that which they cannot carry into the other world? And if they must leave their bodies in the grave, I think, there will be no great occasion in the other world for their rich and splendid apparel, which will not fit a soul.

Thus, what do riches signify, but to minister to the wants, conveniencies, and pleasures, of the body? And therefore, to pride ourselves in riches is to glory in the body too, to think ourselves more considerable than other men, because we can provide better for our bodies than they can. And what a mean and contemptible vice is pride, whose subject and occasion is so mean and contemptible! to pride ourselves in these bodies who have so ignoble an extraction, are of so short a continuance, and will have so ignoble an end, must ly down in the grave, and be food for worms!

As for the care of our bodies, that must unavoidably take up great part of our time to supply the necessities of Nature, and to provide the conveniencies of life; but this may be for the good of our souls too, as honest labour and industry and ingenious arts are: but for men to spend their whole time in sloth and luxury, in eating, and drinking, and sleeping; in dressing and adorning their bodies, or gratifying their lusts; this is to be vile slaves and servants to the body, to bodies which neither need or deserve this from us; after all our care they will tumble into dust, and commonly much the sooner for our indulgence of them.

5. If death be our putting off these bodies, then it is certain that we must live without these bodies till the resurrection; nay, that we must always live without such bodies as these are: for though our bodies shall rise again, yet they shall be changed and transformed into a spiritual nature; as St Paul expressly tell us, *1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44.* "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body:" for, as he adds, ver. 50. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption." Which is true of a fleshly soul; but here is understood of a body of flesh and blood, which is of a corruptible nature; as our reason may satisfy us, that such gross earthly bodies as we now carry about with us cannot live and subsist in those pure regions of light and glory which God inhabits, no more than you can lodge a stone in the air, or breathe nothing but pure æther: and therefore our glorified bodies will have none of these earthly passions which these earthly bodies have, will relish none of the pleasures of flesh and blood: and upon this account we may truly say, that when we once put off these bodies, we shall ever after live without them.

Now, the use of this observation is so very obvious, that, methinks, no man can miss it: for when we consider that we must put off these bodies, and for ever live without them, the very next thought in course is, that we ought to live without our

bodies now as much as possibly we can ; while we do live in them, to have but very little commerce with flesh and sense ; to wean ourselves from all bodily pleasures ; to stifle its appetites and inclinations, and to bring them under perfect command and government ; that, when we see it fit, we may use bodily pleasures without fondness, or let them alone without being uneasy for want of them ; that is, that we may govern all our bodily appetites, not they govern us.

For a wise man should thus reason with himself: If I grow so fond of this body and the pleasures of it ; if I can relish no other pleasures, if I value nothing else, what shall I do when I leave this body ? for bodily pleasures can last no longer than my body does ; what shall I do in the next world, when I shall be stripped of this body, when I shall be a naked soul ? or whatever other covering I may have, shall have no flesh and blood about me : and therefore all the pleasures I value now will then vanish like a dream ; for it is impossible to enjoy bodily pleasures when I have no body. And though there were no other punishments in the next life, yet it is a great pain to me now to have my desires disappointed or delayed : and should I retain the same fondness for these things in the next world, where they cannot be had, the eternal despair of enjoying them would be punishment enough.

Indeed we cannot tell what alteration our putting off these bodies will make in the temper and disposition of our minds.

We see that a long and severe fit of sickness,

while it lasts, will make men absolute philosophers, and give them a great contempt of bodily pleasures; nay, will make the very thoughts of those pleasures nauseous to them which they were very fond of in health. Long fasting and abstinence, and other bodily severities, are an excellent means to alter the habits and inclinations of the mind: and one would think, that to be separated from these bodies must needs make a greater alteration in our minds than either sickness or bodily severities. I dare not say that a sensual man, when he is separated from this body, shall feel the same sensual desires and inclinations which he had in it, and shall be tormented with a violent thirst after those pleasures which he cannot enjoy in a separate state; but this I dare say, that a man who is wholly sunk into flesh and sense, and relishes no other pleasures, is not capable of living happily out of his body, unless you could find out a new scene of material and sensible pleasures to entertain him: for though the particular appetites and inclinations of the body may cease, yet his very soul is sensualized, and therefore is incapable of the pleasures of a spiritual life.

For, indeed, setting aside that mischief which the unruly lusts and appetites of men, and the immoderate use of bodily pleasures, does either to the persons themselves, or to public societies; (and the true reason why we must mortify our sensual inclinations is to improve our minds in all divine graces; for the flesh and the spirit cannot thrive together); sensual and spiritual joys are so contrary to each other, that which of them

soever prevails, according to the degrees of its prevalence, it stifles and suppresses, or wholly subdues the other. A soul which is ravished with the love of God and the blessed Jesus, transported with the spiritual hopes of another life, which feels the passions of devotion, and is enamoured with the glories and beauties of holiness and divine virtues, must have such a very mean opinion of flesh and sense as will make it disgust bodily pleasures, or be very indifferent about them; and a soul which is under the government of sense and passion cannot taste those more intellectual and divine joys: for it is our esteem of things which gives a relish to them, and it is impossible we can highly esteem one without depreciating and undervaluing the other. It is universally true in this case what our Saviour tells us, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon." *Matt. vi. 24.*

The least beginnings of a divine nature in us is to love God above all the world: and as we every day grow more devoutly and passionately in love with God, and take greater pleasure in the spiritual acts of religion, in praising God, and contemplating the divine nature and perfections, and meditating on the spiritual glories of another life, so we abate of our value for present things, till we get a perfect conquest and mastery of them. But he who is perfectly devoted to the pleasures of the body, and service of his lusts, has no spiri-

tual life in him; and though putting off these bodies may cure our bodily appetites and passions, yet it cannot give us a new principle of life, nor work an essential change in a fleshly nature: and therefore such a man, when he is removed from this body, and all the enjoyments of it, is capable of no other happiness; nay, though we are renewed by the divine Spirit, and have a principle of a new life in us, yet, according to the degree of our love to present things, so much the more indisposed are we for the happiness of unbodied spirits.

And therefore, since we must put off these bodies, if we would live for ever happily without them, we must begin betimes to shake off matter and sense, to govern our bodily appetites and passions, to grow indifferent to the pleasures or sense, to use them for the refreshment and necessities of Nature, but not to be over curious about them, not to be fond of enjoying them, nor troubled for the want of them; never to indulge ourselves in unlawful pleasures, and to be very temperate in our use of lawful ones. To be sure we must take care, that the spiritual part, that the sense of God and of religion, be always predominant in us; and this will be a principle of life in us, a principle of divine sensations and joys, when this body shall tumble into dust.

6. If death be our putting off these bodies, then the resurrection from the dead is the reunion of soul and body. The soul does not die, and therefore cannot be said to rise again from the dead; but it is the body, which, like seed, falls into the earth, and springs up again more beau-

tiful and glorious at the resurrection of the just. To believe the resurrection of the body or of the flesh, and to believe another life after this, are two very different things. The Heathens believed a future state, but never dreamed of the resurrection of the body, which is the peculiar article of the Christian faith. And yet it is the resurrection of our bodies which is our victory and triumph over death: for death was the punishment of Adam's sin; and those who are in a separate state still suffer the curse of the law, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." Christ came to deliver us from this curse, by being made a curse for us; that is, to deliver us from death by dying for us. But no man can be said to be delivered from death till his body rise again, for part of him is under the power of death still while his body rots in the grave; nay, he is properly in a state of death while he is in a state of separation of soul and body, which is the true notion of death; and therefore St Paul calls the resurrection of the body the destroying death, 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet: the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;" that is, by the resurrection of the dead, as appears from the whole scope of the place, and is particularly expressed, ver. 54, 55, &c. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass that saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is

" thy victory ! The sting of death is sin, and the
 " strength of sin is the law: but blessed be God
 " who hath given us the victory, though our
 " Lord Jesus Christ." This is the perfection and
 consummation of our reward, when our bodies
 shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, when
 Christ shall change our vile bodies, and make them
 like to his own most glorious body. I doubt not
 but good men are in a very happy state before
 the resurrection, but yet their happiness is not
 complete; for the very state of separation is an
 imperfect state, because a separate soul is not a
 perfect man: a man, by the original constitution
 of his nature, consists of soul and body, and there-
 fore his perfect happiness requires the united glory
 and happiness of both parts of the whole man;
 which is not considered by those who cannot ap-
 prehend any necessity why the body should rise
 again; since, as they conceive, the soul might be
 as completely and perfectly happy without it.
 But yet the soul would not be an entire and per-
 fect man, for a man consists of soul and body: a
 soul in a state of separation, how happy soever
 otherwise it may be, has still this mark of God's
 displeasure on it, that it has lost its body; and
 therefore the reunion of our souls and bodies has
 at least this advantage in it, that it is a perfect re-
 storing of us to the divine favour, that the badge
 and memorial of our sin and apostacy is done
 away in the resurrection of our bodies; and there-
 fore this is called " the adoption, *viz.* the redemp-
 " tion of our bodies," *Rom. viii. 23.*; for then it is
 that God publicly owns us for his sons, when he

raises our dead bodies into a glorious and immortal life. And, besides this, I think we have no reason to doubt but the reunion of soul and body will be a new addition of happiness and glory: for though we cannot guess what the pleasures of glorified bodies are, yet, sure, we cannot imagine, that when these earthly bodies are the instruments of so many pleasures, a spiritual and glorified body should be of no use. A soul and body cannot be vitally united but there must be a sympathy between them, and they receive mutual impressions from each other; and then we need not doubt but that such glorified bodies will highly minister, though in a way unknown to us, to the pleasures of a divine and perfect soul; will infinitely more contribute to the divine pleasures of the mind than these earthly bodies do to our sensual pleasures; that all who have this hope and expectation may, as St Paul speaks, "earnestly groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of our bodies," *Rom. viii. 23*. This being the day of the marriage of the Lamb, this consummates our happiness, when our bodies and souls meet again not to disturb and oppose each other, as they do in this world, where the flesh and the spirit are at perpetual enmity, but to live in eternal harmony, and to heighten and inflame each other's joy. Now, this consideration, that death being a putting off these bodies, the resurrection of the dead must be the raising our bodies into a new and immortal life, and the reunion of them to our souls suggests many useful thoughts to us: for,

This teaches us how we are to use our bodies, how we are to prepare them for immortality and glory. Death, which is the separation of soul and body, is the punishment of sin, and, indeed, it is the cure of it too; for sin is such a leprosy as cannot be perfectly cleansed without pulling down the house which it has once infected; but if we would have these bodies raised up again immortal and glorious, we must begin the cleansing and purification of them here; we must "be sanctified throughout, both in body, soul, and spirit," 1 *Theff.* v. 24. Our bodies must be the temples of the Holy Ghost, must be holy and consecrated places, 1 *Cor.* vi. 19.; must not be polluted with filthy lusts, if we would have them rebuilt again by the divine Spirit, after the desolations which sin hath made. This St Paul tells us at large, *Rom.* viii. 10, 11, 12, 13. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the spirit is life, because of righteousness;" that is, that divine and holy nature which we receive from Christ will secure the life of our souls, and translate us to a happy state after death, but it will not secure us from the necessity of dying; our bodies must die as a punishment of sin, and putrify in the grave; but yet they are not lost for ever: "For if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you;" that is, if your bodies be cleansed and sanctified, be the temples of the Holy Spirit, he will raise them up again into a new life: "There-

“ fore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh
“ to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the
“ flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit
“ do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall
“ live;” if ye subdue the fleshly principle, if ye
bring the flesh into subjection to the spirit, not only
your souls shall live, but your bodies shall be
raised again to immortal life. And this is a
mighty obligation on us, if we love our bodies,
and would have them glorious and immortal, not
to pamper the flesh, and gratify its appetites and
lusts; “ not to yield your members servants to
“ uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; but
“ to yield your members servants to righteousness
“ unto holiness; that being made free from
“ sin, and becoming the servants of God, ye
“ may have your fruit unto holiness, and the end
“ everlasting life,” as the same apostle speaks,
Rom. vi. 19, 22. It is our relation to Christ
that our very bodies are his members; it is our
relation to the Holy Spirit that our bodies are
his temples, which intitles our bodies to a glorious
resurrection. But will Christ own such bodies
for his members as are members of a harlot? will
the Holy Spirit dwell in such a temple as is de-
filed with impure lusts? And therefore such pol-
luted bodies will rise as they lay down, in disho-
nour; will rise not to immortal life, but to eter-
nal death.

For can we think these bodies well prepared for
a glorious resurrection, to be refined into spiritual
bodies, which are become ten times more flesh
than God made them? which are the instruments

and the tempters to all impurity? Is there any reason to expect that such a body should rise again spiritual and glorious which expires in the flames of lust, which falls a sacrifice in the quarrel of a strumpet, which sinks under the load of its own excesses, and eats and drinks itself into the grave? which scorns to die by Adam's sin, but will die by its own, without expecting till the laws of Mortality, according to the ordinary course of Nature, must take place?

Holiness is the only principle of immortality both to soul and body: those love their bodies best, those honour them most, who make them instruments of virtue, who endeavour to refine and spiritualize them, and leave nothing of fleshly appetites and inclinations in them; those are kindest to their bodies who consecrate them for immortality, who take care they shall rise again into the partnership of eternal joys. All the severities of mortification, abstinence from bodily pleasures, watchings, fastings, hard lodging, when they are instruments of a real virtue, not the arts of superstition; when they are intended to subdue our lusts, not to purchase a liberty of sinning; are the most real expressions of honour and respect to these bodies. It shows how unwilling we are to part with them, or to have them miserable; how desirous we are of their advancement unto eternal glories: for the less of flesh they carry to the grave with them, the more glorious will they rise again. This is offering up our bodies a living sacrifice, when we entirely devote them to the service of God; and such living sacrifices

shall live for ever; for if God receives them a living sacrifice, he will preserve them to immortal life.

But the highest honour we can do these bodies, and noblest use we can put them to, is to offer them up, in a proper sense, a sacrifice to God, that is, willingly and cheerfully to die for God, when he calls us to suffering; first to offer up our souls to God in the pure flames of love and devotion, and then freely to give up our bodies to the stake, or to the gibbet, to wild beasts, or more savage men. This vindicates our bodies from the natural shame and reproach of death. What we call a natural death is very inglorious; it is a mark of dishonour, because it is a punishment of sin; such bodies, at best, are sown in dishonour and corruption, as St Paul speaks: but to die a martyr, to fall a sacrifice to God, this is a glorious death; this is not to yield to the laws of Mortality, to Necessity and Fate; but to give back our bodies to God, who gave them to us, and he will keep that which we have committed to his trust to a glorious resurrection: and it will be surprising and astonishing glory with which such bodies shall rise again as have suffered for their Lord; "For if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together;" which seems to imply, that those shall nearest resemble the glory of Christ himself who suffer as he did.

This is the way to make our bodies immortal and glorious. We cannot keep them long here; they are corruptible bodies, and will tumble into dust; we must part with them for a while; and if ever we expect and desire a happy meeting again, we must

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use them with modesty and reverence now. We dishonour our bodies in this world when we make them instruments of wickedness and lust, and lay an eternal foundation of shame and infamy for them in the next world: it is a mortal and killing love to cherish the fleshly principle, to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof: but if you love your bodies, make them immortal, that though they die, they may rise again out of their graves with a youthful vigour and beauty; that they may live for ever, without pain and sickness, without the decays of age, or the interruptions of sleep, or the fatigue or weariness of labour; without wanting either food or raiment, without the least remains of corruption, without knowing what it is to tempt or be tempted, without the least uneasy thought, the least disappointment, the least care, in the full and blissful enjoyment of the eternal and sovereign Good.

S E C T. III.

Death considered as our entrance upon a new and unknown state of life.

III. **L**ET us now consider Death as it is an entrance upon a new and unknown state of life; for it is a new thing to us to live without these bodies, it is what we have never tried yet, and we cannot guess how we shall feel ourselves when we are stript of flesh and blood; what entertainments

we shall find in that place, where there is neither eating nor drinking, neither marrying nor giving in marriage; what kind of business and employment we shall have there where we shall have no occasion for any of these things which employed our time here: for when we have no use of food or raiment, or physic, or houses to dwell in, or whatever our union to these bodies makes necessary now, all those trades and arts which are to provide these conveniencies for us must then cease. This must needs be a very surprising change; and though we are assured of very great happiness in the next world, which infinitely exceeds whatever men call happiness or pleasure here; yet most men are very unwilling to change a known for an unknown happiness; and it confounds and amazes them to think of going out of these bodies they know not whither. Now, this consideration will suggest several very wise and useful thoughts to us.

(1.) How necessary an entire trust and faith in God is. We cannot live happily without it in this world, and I am sure we cannot die comfortably without it; for this is the noblest exercise of faith, to be able cheerfully to resign up our spirits into the hands of God, when we know so little of the state of the other world whither we are going. This was the trial of Abraham's faith, when, in obedience to the command of God, he forsook his own country and his father's house, and followed God into a strange land; *Heb. xi. 8.* "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go into a place which he should after receive for an in-

“ heritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” Canaan was the type of heaven ; and heaven is as unknown a country to us as Canaan was to Abraham. And herein we must imitate the father of the faithful, to be contented to leave our native country, and the world we know, to follow God whithersoever he leads us, into unknown regions, and to unknown and unexperienced happiness. This indeed all men must do, because they cannot avoid leaving this world, but must go when God calls for them. But that which makes it our choice, and an act of faith and virtue, is this, such a strong persuasion, and firm reliance, on the goodness, and wisdom, and promises of God, that though we are ignorant of the state of the other world, we can cheerfully forsake all our known enjoyments, and embrace the promises of an unknown happiness. And there are two distinct acts of this, which answer to Abraham’s faith in leaving his own country, and following God into a strange land ; the first is the exercise of our faith while we live ; the second, when we die.

To mortify all our inordinate appetites and desires, to deny ourselves the sinful vanities and pleasures of this life, for the promises of an unknown happiness in the next world, is our mystical dying to this world, leaving our native country, and following God into a strange and unknown land ; to quit all our present possessions in this world, to forfeit our estates or liberties, all that is dear to us here ; nay, to forsake our native country rather than to offend God and lose our

title to the promises of an unknown happiness, is, in a literal sense, to leave our own country at God's command, not knowing whither we go; which is like Abraham's going out of his own country, and living as a sojourner in the land of promise, without having an inheritance in it. This is that faith which overcomes the world, which makes us pilgrims and strangers here, as those who seek for another country, for a heavenly Canaan, as the apostle tells us Abraham did: "For by faith he
" sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange
" country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac
" and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."
Heb. xi. 9, 10.

And when we come to die, and can with joy and triumph, in an assurance of God's promises, commend our spirits to him, and trust him with our souls, when we know not the country we go to, and never experienced what the happiness of it is, without any concern or solicitude about it; this is a noble act of faith, which does great honour to God, and conquers all the natural aversions to death, and makes it an easy thing to leave this world, and the object of our desire and choice, to see that promised land, and taste those pleasures which we are yet strangers to. We must live and we must die in faith too, as the patriarchs did, who all died in faith, not having received the promises, but seeing them afar off: and for that reason, the other world must be in a great measure unknown to us; for could we before-

hand taste the pleasures of it, or know what they are, it would be no act of faith to leave this world for it, to be willing to be translated from earth to heaven. But no man is worthy of heaven who dares not take God's word for it; and therefore God has concealed these glories from us, and given us only a promise of a great but an unknown happiness for the object of our hope, to be a trial of our faith and obedience, and trust in him.

That the other world is an unknown state to us, trains us up to a great trust and confidence in God; for we must trust God for our souls, and for the next world; and this naturally teaches us to trust God in this world too, to live securely upon his providence, and to suffer him to dispose of us as he pleases.

Indeed no man can trust God in this world who has not a steadfast faith in God for the rewards of the next. For the external administrations of Providence are not always what we could wish; but good men are very well contented, and have great reason to be so, to take this world and the next together; and therefore are not solicitous about present things, but leave God to chuse what condition for them he pleases, as being well assured of his goodness who has prepared for them eternal rewards.

And those who can trust God with their souls, who can trust him for an immortal life, for an unseen and unknown happiness, will find no difficulty in trusting him for this world; I mean, those who are concerned for their future happi-

ness, and take any care of their souls. If all who are unconcerned for their souls, and never trouble their heads what will become of them hereafter, may be said to trust God with their souls, then, I confess, this will not hold true; for the greatest number of those who thus trust God with their souls will trust him for nothing else. But this is not to trust God, but to be careless of our souls. But now, when a man who stedfastly believes another life after this, and is heartily concerned what will become of him for ever, can securely rely on God's promises, beyond his own knowledge and prospect of things, he will very easily trust God for every thing else; for he is not so solicitous about any thing in this world as he is for his soul; and if he can trust God with his dearest interests, surely he will trust him in less matters. The promises of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ are the highest demonstrations of God's love to us; and he who is so well assured of God's love that he can trust him for heaven, can never distrust his care and providence in this world. The method of God's providence can never be so unknown to us in this world as the state of the other world is unknown; and if we can cheerfully follow God into an unseen and unknown world, cannot we be contented to follow him through the most dark and perplexed tracts of Providence here? So that we have as little reason to complain that the state of the other world is unknown to us, as we have, that we must live by faith in this world; for absent, unseen and unknown things are the objects of our faith. And

those who will trust God no farther than they can see, neither in this world nor in the next, have no reason to depend upon his providence here, nor to expect heaven hereafter.

(2.) The state of the other world being so much unknown to us, is a very good reason why we should cheerfully comply with all the terms and conditions of the gospel; to do whatever our Saviour requires, that we may obtain eternal life. This, it may be, you will not so readily apprehend, and yet the reason of it is very plain; for since the state of the other world is so much unknown to us, we do not, and cannot, know neither what dispositions, and habits, and complexion of soul, are necessary to fit and qualify us for this unknown happiness. But our Saviour, who knew what that state is, knew also what is necessary to that state; and therefore the wisest course we can take is to obey all his laws without any dispute, not only as the conditions of happiness, without which we shall not be admitted into heaven, but as the necessary preparation for it. As, to explain this by a parallel case, which you will easily understand; Suppose we had pre-existed in a former state, as some say we did, before we came into these bodies, and before we knew any thing of this world, or what the pleasures and entertainments of it are, should have been told what kind of bodies we must go into, no doubt but there would have been wonderful wise disputes about the make and frame of our bodies; we should have thought some parts superfluous, or useless, or ill contrived; indeed, should have wondered what

such a body was made for, as well we might, before we understood the use of any part of it. But God, who knew what he intended us for, provided such a body for us as is both beautiful and useful; and we cannot want any part of it but we are deprived of some conveniencies and pleasures of life. And thus we may easily suppose it to be with reference to the next world, that the habits and tempers of our minds are as necessary to relish the pleasures of that state as our bodily senses are to taste bodily pleasures: and since we do not particularly know what the delights of that state are, and Christ does, we ought as perfectly to resign up ourselves to his directions for the fashioning our minds, as we trust God to form our bodies for us. Whatever graces and virtues he requires us to exercise in this world, though we do not see the present use of them, though we may think them an unnecessary restraint of our liberties, and very needless and unreasonably severities; yet we ought to conclude, that Christ knew the reason of such commands, and that such qualities and dispositions of mind will be found as necessary in the next world as our bodily senses are here.

And this we ought especially to conclude of such degrees and instances of virtue as seem above our present state, and so well fitted to our condition of life in this world: for why should our Saviour give us such laws, and exact such a degree of virtue from us here, as abridges our present enjoyments, and, it may be, exposes us to great inconveniencies and sufferings, were not that temper

of mind, which these virtues form in us, of great use and necessity in the next life? As for instance,

We should think it sufficient, while we live in this world, where there are so many inviting objects, and while we are clothed with bodies of flesh, which are made for the enjoyments of sense, and have natural appetites and inclinations to them, so to govern ourselves in the use of these pleasures, as neither to make ourselves beasts, nor to injure our neighbours: and, while we keep within these bounds, to gratify our appetites and inclinations to the full. For it is certainly the happiness of an earthly creature to enjoy this world, though a reasonable creature must do it reasonably. But not to love this world seems a hard command to a creature who lives in it, and was made to enjoy it; to despise bodily pleasures, to subdue the fleshly principle in us, not only to reason, but to the spirit; to live above the body, and to strive to stifle, not only its irregular but even its natural appetites, and to taste the pleasures of it very sparingly, and with great indifference of mind, seems a very hard saying to flesh and blood. We should think it time enough to have our conversation in heaven when we come thither; but it is plainly above the state of an earthly creature to live in heaven, to have all our joys, our hopes, our treasure, and our hearts there. The state of this world would be very happy and prosperous, without such a raised, and refined, and spiritualized mind; and therefore these are such virtues as are not necessary to the present constitution of this world, and therefore can be only in order to the next.

Thus, it is sufficient to the happiness and good government of this world, that men do no injury to each other, and that they express mutual civilities and respect; that they take care of those whom Nature has endeared to them; that they be just, and, in ordinary cases, helpful to others; and therefore this is all that the state of this world requires. But that divine and universal charity, which teaches us to love all men as ourselves, even our enemies, and those who hate and persecute us; to forgive the injuries we suffer, and not to revenge and retaliate them; not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrarywise blessing: I say, this wonderful virtue does not only ly extremely cross to self-love, but it is hardly reconcileable with the state of this world; for the practice of it is very dangerous when we live among bad men, who will take advantage of such a bearing and forgiving virtue, to give great occasions for the constant exercise of it; and nothing but a particular Providence, which watches over such good men, can secure them from being an easy prey to the wicked and unjust. Nay, we see this is not practicable in the government of the world: civil magistrates are forced to punish evil doers, or the world would be a bedlam; and therefore those who have thought such public executions of justice to be inconsistent with this law of forgiving injuries, and not revenging ourselves, have made it unlawful for Christians to be magistrates, because hanging, or whipping, or pillorying malefactors, is not forgiving them, as certainly it is not. A very absurd doctrine! which

makes it necessary that there should always be Heathens in every nation to govern even a Christian kingdom ; or that the Christian world should have no government at all, though nominal and professed Christians have as much need of government as ever any Heathens had. But this forgiving enemies is only a private virtue, not the rule of public government ; which shows, that the state of this world is so far from requiring this virtue, that it will admit only the private exercises of it, and that too under the protection of a particular Providence, to defend those good men who must not avenge themselves. Now, such virtues as the state of this world does not require, we must conclude are only in order to the next ; and that tho' we do not so well discern the reason and use of this divine charity here, yet this temper of mind is absolutely necessary to the happiness of the other world ; and for that reason it is that Christ requires the exercise of it now : for we cannot imagine any other reason why our Saviour should make any acts of virtue, which the state of this world does not require the present exercise of, the necessary terms and conditions of our future happiness, but only, that such dispositions of mind are as necessary to qualify us to relish those divine pleasures as our bodily senses are to perceive the delights and pleasures of this world. This is a mighty obligation on us to obey the laws of our Saviour, as the methods of our advancement to eternal glory : not to dispute his commands, how uneasy or unreasonable soever they may now appear ; for the reasons of them are not to be fetched

from this world, but from the next, and therefore are such as we cannot so well understand now, because we know so little of the next world; but we may safely conclude, that Christ knows a reason for it, and that we shall quickly understand the reason of it when we come into the other world: and therefore we should endeavour to exercise all those heights of virtue which the gospel recommends to us; for, as much as we fall short of these, so will our glory and happiness abate in the other world.

(3.) Though the state we enter on at death be in a great measure unknown to us, yet this is no reasonable discouragement to good men, no encouragement to the bad. 1. It is no reasonable discouragement to good men; for though we do not know what it is, yet we know it is a great happiness: so it is represented to us in scripture, as a kingdom, and a crown; an eternal kingdom, and a never-fading crown. Now, would any man be unwilling to leave a mean and homely cottage to go and take possession of a kingdom, because he had never yet seen it, though he had heard very glorious things of it from very faithful and credible witnesses? For let us a little consider in what sense the happiness of the other world is unknown.

1st, That it is not such a kind of happiness as in this world, that it is like nothing which we have seen or tasted yet: but a wise and good man cannot think this any disparagement to the other world, though it would have been a real disparagement to it had it been like this world; for

here is nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit, nothing but an empty scene, which makes a fine show, but has no real and solid joys. Good men have enough of this world; and are sufficiently satisfied that none of these things can make them happy; and therefore cannot think it any disadvantage to change the scene, and try some unknown and unexperienced joys: for, if there be such a thing as happiness to be found, it must be something that they have not known yet, something that this world does not afford.

2dly, When we say that the state of the other world is unknown, the only meaning of it is, that it is a state of such happiness, so far beyond any thing we ever experienced yet, that we cannot form any notion or idea of it: we know that there is such a happiness; we know, in some measure, wherein this happiness consists, *viz.* in seeing God, and the blessed Jesus, who loved us, and gave himself for us; in praising our great Creator and Redeemer; in conversing with saints and angels. But how great, how ravishing and transporting, a pleasure this is we cannot tell, because we never yet felt it: our dull devotions, our imperfect conceptions of God in this world, cannot help us to guess what the joys of heaven are: we know not how the sight of God, how the thoughts of him, will pierce our souls; with what ecstasies and raptures we shall sing the song of the Lamb; with what melting affections perfect souls shall embrace; what glories and wonders we shall there see and know: "Such things
" eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath

“ it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” Now, methinks, this should not make the thoughts of death uneasy to us, should not make us unwilling to go to heaven, that the happiness of heaven is too great for us to know or to conceive in this world. For,

3dly, Men are naturally fond of unknown and untried pleasures ; which is so far from being a disparagement to them, that it raises our expectations of them that they are unknown. In the things of this world enjoyment usually lessens our esteem and value for them, and we always value that most which we have never tried ; and, methinks, the happiness of this world should not be the only thing we despise before we try it. All present things are mean, and appear to be so, when they are enjoyed : but whatever expectations we have of the unknown happiness of the other world, the enjoyment of it will as much exceed our largest expectations as other things usually fall below them ; and we shall be forced to confess, with the Queen of Sheba, when she saw Solomon’s glory, that not half of it was told her. It is some encouragement to us, that the happiness of heaven is too big to be known in this world ; for did we perfectly know it now, it could not be very great ; and therefore we should entertain ourselves with the hopes of this unknown happiness, of those joys which we now have such imperfect conceptions of. 2. Nor is it, on the other hand, any encouragement to bad men that the miseries of the other world are unknown ; for it is known that God has threatened very terrible punishment

against bad men : and that what these punishments are is unknown makes them a great deal more formidable : for who knows the power of God's wrath ? who knows how miserable God can make men ? This makes it a senseless thing for men to harden themselves against the fears of the other world, because they know not what it is ; and how then can they tell, though they could bear up under all known miseries, but that they may be such punishments as they cannot bear ? That they are unknown argues that they are something more terrible than they are acquainted with in this world. They are represented, indeed, by the most dreadful and terrible things ; by lakes of fire and brimstone, blackness of darkness, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out : but bad men think this cannot be true in a literal sense ; that there can be no fire to burn souls and torment them eternally. Now, suppose it were so, yet, if they believe those threatenings, they must believe that some terrible thing is signified by everlasting burnings. And, if fire and brimstone serve only for metaphors to describe these torments by, what will the real sufferings of the damned be ! for the Spirit of God does not use to describe things by such metaphors as are greater than the things themselves. And, therefore, let no bad man encourage himself in sin, because he does not know what the punishments of the other world are. This should possess us with the greater awe and dread of them, since every thing in the other world, not only the happiness, but the miseries, of it will prove greater, not less, than we expect.

C H A P. II.

Concerning the certainty of Death.

HAVING thus showed you under what notions we are to consider death, and what wisdom we should learn from them; I proceed to the second thing, the certainty of death: *It is appointed unto men once to die*; ἀποκνίται, it remains, it is reserved; and, as it were, laid up for them.

I believe no man will desire a proof of this, which he sees with his eyes: one generation succeeds another, and those who live longest at last yield to the fatal stroke. There were two men indeed, Enoch and Elias, who did not die, as death signifies a separation of soul and body, but were translated to heaven without dying: but this is the general law for mankind, from which none are excepted but those whom God, by his sovereign authority, and, for wise reasons, thinks fit to except, which have been but two since the creation, and will be no more till Christ comes to judge the world; for then, St Paul tells us, those who are alive at Christ's second coming shall not die, but shall be changed, 1 Cor. xv. 51; 52. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall
 " not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a
 " moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last
 " trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the
 " dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall

“ be changed.” This is such a change as is equivalent to death, it puts us in the same state with those who are dead, and at the last judgment rise again.

S E C T. I.

A vindication of the justice and goodness of God in appointing Death for all men.

BUT before I show you what use to make of this consideration, that we must all certainly die, let us examine how mankind comes to be mortal? This was no dispute among the Heathens: for it was no great wonder that an earthly body should die, and dissolve again into dust; it would be a much greater wonder to see a body of flesh and blood preserved in perpetual youth and vigour, without decays of nature, without being sick, or growing old. But this is a question among us; or if it may not be called a question, yet it is what deserves our consideration, since we learn from the history of Moses, that as frail and brittle as these earthly tabernacles are, yet if man had not sinned he had not died.

When God created man, and placed him in paradise, he forbade him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: “ Of every tree
“ of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of
“ the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
“ thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou

“eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” *Gen. ii. 16, 17.* And when, notwithstanding this threatening, our first parents had eaten of it, God confirms and ratifies the sentence, “Dust thou art, “and unto dust thou shalt return.” *Gen. iii. 19.* What this tree of knowledge of good and evil was, is as great a mystery to us as what the tree of life was, for we understand neither of them; which make some men, who would not be thought to be ignorant of any thing, to fly to allegorical senses. But though I would be glad to know this if I could, yet I must be contented to leave it a mystery, as I find it. That which we are concerned in is, that this sentence of death and mortality, which was pronounced on Adam, fell on all his posterity: as St Paul tells us, *1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.* “That by man came death; and in Adam “all die.” And this he does not only assert, but prove, *Rom. v. 12, 13, 14.* “Wherefore by man “sin entered into the world, and death by sin, “and so death passed upon all men, for that all “have sinned: for until the law sin was in the “world, but sin is not imputed where there is no “law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam “till Moses, even over them who had not sinned “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” The design of all which is to prove that men die, or are mortal, not for their own sins, but for the sin of Adam; which the apostle proves by this argument, because, though all men as well as Adam have sinned, yet, till the giving the law of Moses, there was no law which threatened death against sin but only that law given to Adam in

paradise, which no man else ever did, or ever could, transgress but he. Now, "sin is not imputed where there is no law;" that is, it is not imputed to any man to death before there is any law which threatens death against it; that no man can be reckoned to die for those things which no law punishes with death. Upon what account then, says the apostle, could those men die, who lived between Adam and Moses, before the law was given which threatens death? and yet die they all did, even those "who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;" who had neither eaten the forbidden fruit, nor sinned against any other express law threatening death. This could be for no other sin but Adam's; he sinned, and brought death into the world, and thus death passed upon all men for his sin: notwithstanding they themselves were sinners; for though they were sinners, yet that they died was not owing to their own sins, because they had not sinned against any law which threatened death, but to the sin of Adam: and, therefore, in a proper sense, "in Adam all die."

Now, this is thought very hard, that the sin of Adam should bring death upon all his posterity; that one man sinned, and all men must die: and, therefore, I suppose no man will think it improper to my present argument, to give such an account of this matter as will evidently justify the wisdom and goodness, as well as the justice, of God in it.

1. In the first place, then, I observe, that an immortal life in this world is not the original right

of earthly creatures, but was wholly owing to the grace and favour of God. I call that an original right which is founded in the nature of things; for otherwise, properly speaking, no creatures have any right either to being or to subsistence, which is a continuance in being: it is the goodness and the power of God, which both made the world, and upholds and sustains all things in being. And therefore Plato confesses, that the inferior gods, those immortal spirits which he thought worthy of divine honours, were both made by the supreme God, and did subsist by his will; for he who made all things can annihilate them again when he pleases; and therefore their subsistence is as much owing to the divine Goodness as their creation. But yet there is a great difference between the natural gift and bounty of God and what is supernatural, or above the nature of things: what God makes by nature immortal, so that it has no principal of mortality in its constitution, immortality may be said to be its natural right, because it is by nature immortal, as spirits and the souls of men are. And in this case it would be thought very hard that a whole race of immortal beings should be made mortal for the sin of one; which would be to deprive them of their natural right to immortality without their own fault. But when any creature is immortal, not by nature, but by supernatural grace, God may bestow this supernatural immortality upon what conditions he pleases, and take the forfeiture of it when he sees fit. And this was the case of man in innocence: his body was not by nature

immortal; for a body made of dust will naturally resolve into dust again; and therefore, without a supernatural power, an earthly body must die: for which reason God provided a remedy against mortality, the tree of life, which he planted in paradise, and without which man could not be immortal: so that mortality was a necessary consequence of his losing paradise; for when he was banished from the tree of life, he could have no remedy nor preservative against death. Now, I suppose no man will question but God might very justly turn Adam out of paradise for his disobedience, and then he must die, and all his posterity die in him: for he being by nature mortal, must beget mortal children, and having forfeited the tree of life, he and his posterity, who are all shut out of paradise with him, must necessarily die: which takes nothing from them to which any man had a right, (for no man had a natural right to paradise and the tree of life), but only leaves them to those laws of mortality to which an earthly creature is naturally subject. God had promised paradise and the tree of life to no man but to Adam himself, whom he created and placed in paradise; and therefore he took nothing away from any man, but from Adam, when he thrust him out of paradise. Children, indeed, must follow the condition of their parents: had Adam preserved his right to the tree of life, we had enjoyed it too; but he forfeiting it, we lost it in him, and in him die; we lost, I say, not any thing that we had a right to, but such a supernatural privilege as we might have had, had he preserved his

innocence. And this is a sufficient vindication of the justice of God in it. He has done us no injury: we are by nature mortal creatures, and he leaves us in that mortal state: and to withdraw favours upon a reasonable provocation is neither hard nor unjust.

2. For we must consider farther, when sin was once entered into the world, an immortal life here became impossible without a constant series of miracles. Adam had sinned, and thereby corrupted his own nature, and therefore must necessarily propagate a corrupt nature to his posterity; his earthly passions were broke loose, he now knew good and evil, and therefore was in the hands of his own counsel to refuse or chuse the good or evil; and when the animal life was once awakened in him, there was no great dispute which way his affections would incline; to be sure it is evident enough in his posterity, whose boisterous passions act such tragedies in the world. Now, suppose in a state of innocence that the tree of life would have preserved men immortal, when no man would injure himself nor another, when there was no danger from wild beasts, or intemperate air, or poisonous herbs; yet, I suppose, no man will say but that, even in paradise itself, (could we suppose any such thing), Adam might have been devoured by a wild beast, or killed with a stab at the heart; or had there been any poison there, it would have killed him, had he eaten or drunk it; or else he had another kind of body in paradise than we have now; for I am sure these things would kill us. Consider, then,

how impossible it is that in this fallen apostate state God should preserve man immortal without working miracles every minute. Men's passions are now very unruly, and they fall out with one another, and will kill one another if they can; of which the world had a very early example in Cain, who slew his brother Abel; and all those murders and bloody wars since that day put this matter out of doubt. Now this can never be prevented unless God should make our bodies invulnerable, which a body of flesh and blood cannot be without a miracle. Some die by their own hands, others by wild beasts, others by evil accidents; and there are so many ways of destroying these brittle bodies, that it is the greatest wonder that they last so long. And yet Adam's body in paradise was as very earth, and as brittle, as ours are. But all this had been prevented had man continued innocent; they would not then have quarrelled or fought, they would not have died by their own hands, nor drunk themselves into a fever, nor over-loaded Nature with riotous excesses: there had been no wild beast to devour, no infectious air, or poisonous herbs; and then the tree of life would have repaired all the decays of Nature, and preserved a perpetual youth: but in this state we are now, the tree of life could not preserve us immortal, if a sword or poison can kill; which shows us how impossible it was but that sin and death must come into the world together. Man might have been immortal had he never sinned; but brutish and ungoverned passions will destroy us, without a miracle. And, therefore, we

have no reason now to quarrel at the Divine Providence that we are mortal; for, in the ordinary course of Providence, it is impossible it should be otherwise.

3. Considering what the state of this world necessarily is since the fall of man, an immortal life here is not desirable.

No state ought to be immortal, if it be designed as an act of favour and kindness, but what is completely happy; but this world is far enough from being such a state: some few years give wise men enough of it, though they are not oppressed with any great calamities; and there are a great many miseries which nothing but death can give relief to. This puts an end to the sorrows of the poor, of the oppressed, of the persecuted; it is a haven of rest, after all the tempests of a troublesome world; it knocks off the prisoner's shackles, and sets him at liberty; it dries up the tears of the widow and fatherless; it eases the complaints of a hungry belly and naked back; it tames the proudest tyrants, and restores peace to the world; it puts an end to all our labour, and it supports men under their present adversities, especially when they have a prospect of a better life after this. The labour and misery of men under the sun is very great, but it would be intolerable were it endless: and therefore, since sin is entered into the world, and so many necessary evils and calamities attend it, it is an act of goodness, as well as justice, in God to shorten this miserable life, and transport good men into a more happy as well as immortal state.

4. Since the fall of man, mortality and death is necessary to the good government of the world: nothing else can give check to some men's wickedness, but either the fear of death, or the execution of it: some men are so outrageously wicked, that nothing can put a stop to them, and prevent the mischief they do in the world, but to cut them off. This is the reason of capital punishments among men, to remove those out of the world who will be a plague to mankind while they live in it. For this reason God destroyed the whole race of mankind by a deluge of water, excepting Noah and his family, because they were incurably wicked. For this reason he sends plagues, and famines, and sword, to correct the exorbitant growth of wickedness, to lessen the number of sinners, and to lay restraints on them. And if the world be such a bedlam as it is under all these restraints, what would it be were it filled with immortal sinners!

Ever since the fall of Adam, there always was, and ever will be, a mixture of good and bad men in the world; and justice requires that God should reward the good and punish the wicked. But that cannot be done in this world; for these present external enjoyments are not the proper rewards of virtue. There is no complete happiness here; man was never turned into this world till he sinned, and was flung out of paradise; which is an argument that God never intended this world for a place of reward and perfect happiness; nor is this world a proper place for the final punishment of bad men; because good men

live among them, and, without a miracle, bad men cannot be greatly punished but good men must share with them; and were all bad men punished to their deserts, it would make this world the very image and picture of hell, which would be a very unfit place for good men to live and to be happy in. As much as good men suffer from the wicked in this world, it is much more tolerable than to have their ears filled with the perpetual cries of such miserable sinners, and their eyes terrified with such perpetual and amazing executions. Good and bad men must be separated before the one can be finally rewarded, or the other punished; and such a separation as this cannot be made in this world, but must be reserved for the next.

So that, considering the fallen state of man, it was not fitting, it was not for the good of mankind, that they should be immortal here. Both the wisdom, and goodness, and justice, of God required that man should die; which is an abundant justification of this divine decree, "that it is appointed for men once to die."

5. As a further justification of the divine goodness in this, we may observe, that before God pronounced that sentence on Adam, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return," he expressly promised, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, *Gen. iii. 15.* in his curse upon the serpent who beguiled Eve; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his

“heel.” Which contains the promise of sending Christ into the world, who “by death should destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” *Heb. ii. 14, 15.*; *i. e.* before he denounces the sentence of death against man, he promises a Saviour and Deliverer, who should triumph over death, and raise our dead bodies out of the dust, immortal and glorious. Here is a most admirable mixture of mercy and judgment! Man had forfeited an earthly immortality, and must die; but before God would denounce the sentence of death against him, he promises to raise up his dead body again to a new and endless life. And have we any reason to complain then that God has dealt hardly with us, in involving us in the sad consequences of Adam’s sin, and exposing us to a temporal death, when he has promised to raise us up from the dead again, and to bestow a more glorious immortality on us, which we shall never lose? When man had sinned it was necessary that he should die, because he could never be completely and perfectly happy in this world, as you have already heard; and the only possible way to make him happy was to translate him into another world, and to bestow a better immortality on him. This God has done, and that in a very stupendous way, by giving his own Son to die for us.

And now we have little reason to complain that we all died in Adam, since we are made alive in Christ. To have died in Adam, never to have

lived more, had indeed been very severe upon mankind: but when death signifies only a necessity of going out of these bodies, and living without them for some time, in order to reassume them again immortal and glorious, we have no reason to think this any great hurt. Nay, indeed, if we consider things aright, the divine Goodness has improved the fall of Adam to the raising of mankind to a more happy and perfect state. For though a paradise, where God placed Adam in innocence, was a happier state of life than this world, freed from all the disorders of a mortal body, and from all the necessary cares and troubles of this life, yet you will all grant that heaven is a happier place than an earthly paradise; and therefore it is more for our happiness to be translated from earth to heaven than to have lived always in an earthly paradise. You will all grant, that the state of good men, when they go out of these bodies, before the resurrection, is a happier life than paradise was; for it is "to be with Christ," as St Paul tells us, "which is far better," *Phil. i. 23*. And when our bodies rise again from the dead, you will grant they will be more glorious bodies than Adam's was in innocence; for "the first man was of the earth earthy, but the second man is the Lord from heaven," *1 Cor. xv. 47*. Adam had an earthly mortal body, though it should have been immortal by grace; but at the resurrection "our bodies shall be fashioned like to Christ's most glorious body. The righteous shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their father; that as we

“ have borne the image of the earthy, we shall
“ also bear the image of the heavenly,” 1 *Cor.*
xv. 49.; so that our redemption by Christ has infinitely the advantage of Adam’s fall, and we have no reason to complain, that “ by man came
“ death, since by man also came the resurrection
“ of the dead.” So that St Paul might well magnify the grace of God in our redemption by Christ, above his justice and severity in punishing Adam’s sin with death, *Rom.* v. 15, 16, 17. “ But
“ not as the offence, so also is the free gift: for
“ if through the offence of one many be dead;
“ much more the grace of God, and the gift by
“ grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath
“ abounded unto many. And not as it was by
“ one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment
“ was by one to condemnation; but the free gift
“ is of many offences unto justification. For if
“ by one man’s offence death reigned by one,
“ much more they which receive abundance of
“ grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall
“ reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” Where the apostle magnifies the grace of God upon a four-fold account. 1. That death was the just reward of sin; it came by “ the offence of one,” and was an act of justice in God: whereas our redemption by Christ is the gift of grace, the free gift, which we had no just claim to. 2. That by Christ we are not only delivered from the effects of Adam’s sin, but from the guilt of our own: “ For though
“ the judgment was by one to condemnation; the
“ free gift is of many offences unto justification.”
3. That though we die in Adam, we are not

barely made alive again in Christ, but "shall reign
" in life by one, Jesus Christ ;" which is a much
happier life than what we lost in Adam. 4. That
as we die by one man's offence, so we live by one
too : " By the righteousness of one, the free gift
" comes upon all men unto justification of life."
We have no reason to complain that the sin of
Adam is imputed to us to death, if the righteous-
ness of Christ purchase for us eternal life. The
first was a necessary consequence of Adam's losing
paradise ; the second is wholly owing to the grace
of God.

Thus we see what it is that makes us mortal ;
God did not make death ; he created us in a hap-
py and immortal state ; but " by man sin entered
" into the world, and death by sin." Whatever
aversion, then, we have to death should beget in
us a greater horror of sin, which did not only at
first make us mortal, but is to this day both the
cause of death and the sting of it. No degree,
indeed, of virtue now can preserve us from dying,
but yet virtue may prolong our lives, and make
them happy, while sin very often hastens us to the
grave, and cuts us off in the very midst of our
days. An intemperate and lustful man destroys
the most vigorous constitution of body, dies of a
fever, or a dropsy, and rottenness or consumptions ;
others fall a sacrifice to private revenge or public
justice, or a divine vengeance ; " for the wicked
" shall not live out half their days." However,
setting aside some little natural aversions, which
are more easily conquered, and death were a very
innocent, harmless, nay, desirable thing, did not

sin give a sting to it, and terrify us with the thoughts of that judgment which is to follow. Quarrel not then at the divine Justice in appointing death; God is very good, as well as just, in it; but vent all your indignation against sin; pull out this sting of death, and then you will see nothing but smiles and charms in it; then it is, nothing but putting off these mortal bodies, to reassume them again, with all the advantage of an immortal youth. It is certain, indeed, we must die, this is appointed for us all; and the very certainty of our death will teach us that wisdom which may help us to regain a better immortality than we have lost.

S E C T. II.

How to improve this consideration, that we must certainly die.

FOR, I. If it be certain that we must die, this should teach us frequently to think of death, to keep it always in our eyes and view. For why should we cast off the thoughts of that which will certainly come, especially when it is so necessary to the good government of our lives, "to remember that we must die?" If we must die, I think it concerns us to take care that we may die happily, and that depends upon our living well; and nothing has such a powerful influence upon the good government of our lives as the thoughts of

death. I have already showed you what wisdom death will teach us ; but no man will learn this who does not consider what it is to die ; and no man will practise it, who does not often remember that he must die : but he that lives under a constant sense of death has a perpetual antidote against the follies and vanities of this world, and a perpetual spur to virtue.

When such a man finds his desires after this world enlarge, beyond not only the wants, but the conveniencies, of nature, Thou fool, says he to himself, what is the meaning of all this? what kindles this insatiable thirst of riches? why must there be no end of adding house to house, and field to field? is this world thy home? is this thy abiding city? dost thou hope to take up thy eternal rest here? Vain man! thou must shortly remove thy dwelling, and then whose shall all these things be? Death will shortly close thy eyes, and then thou shalt not so much as see the god thou worshippest; the earth shall shortly cover thee, and then thou shalt have thy mouth and belly-full of clay and dust. Such thoughts as these will cool our desires to this present world; will make us contented when we have enough, and very charitable and liberal of what we can spare: for what should we do with more in this world than will carry us through it? what better and wiser use can we make of such riches as we cannot carry with us into the other world, than to return them thither beforehand into acts of piety and charity, that we may receive the rewards and recompense of them in a better life; that we may "make to

“ ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations.”

When he finds his mind begin to swell, and increase as his fortune and honours do; Lord, thinks he, what a bubble is this, which every breath of air can blow away! How vain a thing is man in his greatest glory, who appears gay and beautiful, like a flower in the Spring, and is as soon cut down and withered! Though we should meet with no change in our fortune here, yet we shall suddenly be removed out of this world: the scene of this life will change, and there is an end of earthly greatness. And what a contemptible mind is that which is swelled with dying honours, which looks big indeed as a body does which is swelled out of all proportion with a dropsy or tympany? but that is its disease, not a natural beauty. What am I better than the poorest man that begs an alms, unless I be wiser and more virtuous than he? Can lands and houses, great palaces and titles; things which are not ours, and which we cannot keep, make such a mighty difference between one man and another? Are these the riches? are these the beauties and glories of a spirit? are we not all made of the same mould? is not God the father of us all? must we not all die alike, and ly down in the dust together? and can the different parts we act in this world, which are not so long as a scene of a play compared to an eternal duration, make such a vast difference between men? This will make men humble and modest in the highest fortune, as minding them, that when they are got

to the top round of honour, if they keep from falling, yet they must be carried down again, and laid as low as the dust.

Thus, when he finds the body growing upon the mind, and intoxicating it with the love of sensual pleasures, he remembers that his body must die, and all these pleasures must die with it; that they are indeed killing pleasures which kill a mortal body before its time; that it does not become a man, who is but a traveller in this world; but a pilgrim and stranger here, to study ease and softness, and luxury; that a soul which must live for ever should seek after more lasting pleasures, which may survive the funeral of the body, and be a spring of ravishing joys when he is stript of flesh and blood. These are the thoughts which the consideration of death will suggest to us, as I have already shown you; and it is impossible for a man who has always these thoughts at hand to be much imposed on by the pageantry of this world, by the transient honours and pleasures of it.

It is indeed, I think, a very impracticable rule, which some men give, to live always as if they were to die the next moment. Our lives should always be as innocent as if we were immediately to give up our accounts to God; but it is impossible to have always those sensible apprehensions of death about us which we have when we see it approaching. But though we cannot live as if we were immediately to die, (which would put an end not only to all innocent mirth, but to all the necessary business of the world, which, I believe, no dying man would concern himself for), yet we may, and

we ought, to live as those who must certainly die, and ought to have these thoughts continually about us, as a guard upon our actions. For whatever is of such mighty consequence to us as death is, if it be certain, ought always to give laws to our behaviour and conversation.

2dly, If it is certain we must die, the very first thing we ought to do in this world, after we come to years of understanding, should be to prepare for death, that whenever death comes we may be ready for it.

This, I confess, is not according to the way of this world; for dying is usually the last thing they take care of. This is thought a little unseasonable, while men are young and healthful, and vigorous. But besides the uncertainty of our lives, and that it is possible, while we delay, death may seize on us before we are provided for it; and then we must be miserable for ever; (which I shall speak to under the next head); I doubt not but to convince every considering man, that an early preparation for death is the very best means to make our lives happy in this world, while we do continue here. Nor shall I urge here, how a life of holiness and virtue, which is the best and only preparation for death, tends to make us happy in this world, delivers us from all those mischiefs, which the wildness and giddiness of youth, and the more confirmed debaucheries of riper years, expose men to: for this is properly the commendation of virtue, not of an early preparation for death. And yet this is really a great engagement and motive to prepare betimes for death, since such a

preparation for death will put us to no greater hardships and inconveniencies than the practice of such virtues as will prolong our lives, preserve or increase our fortunes, give us honour and reputation in the world; and make us beloved both by God and men. But, setting aside these things, there are two advantages of an early preparation for death, which contribute more to our happiness than all the world besides. *1st*, That it betimes delivers us from the fears of death, and, consequently, from most other fears. *2^{dly}*, That it supports us under all the troubles and calamities of this life.

1. It betimes delivers us from the fears of death; and indeed it is then only that a man begins to live when he is got above the fears of death. Were men thoughtful and considerate, death would hang over them in all their mirth and jollity like a fatal sword by a single hair, it would sour all their enjoyments, and strike terror into their hearts and looks. But the security of most men is, that they put off the thoughts of death as they do their preparation for it: they live secure and free from danger, only because they will not open their eyes to see it. But these are such examples as no wise man will propose to himself, because they are not safe. And there are so many occasions to put these men in mind of death, that it is a very hard thing not to think of it; and whenever they do, it chills their blood and spirits, and draws a black melancholy veil over all the glories in the world. How are such men surprised when any danger approaches? when death

comes within view, and shows his scythe, and only some few sands at the bottom of the glass? This is a frightful sight to men who are not prepared to die; and yet should they give themselves liberty to think in what danger they live every minute, how many thousand accidents may cut them off, which they neither can foresee nor prevent; fear, and horror, and consternation, would be their entertainment, till they could think of death without fear; till they were reconciled to the thoughts of dying, by great and certain hopes of a better life after death.

So that no man can live happily if he lives like a man, with his thoughts, and reason, and consideration, about him, but he who takes care betimes to prepare for death and another world. Till this be done, a wise man will see himself always in danger, and then he must always fear. But he is a happy man who knows and considers himself to be mortal, and is not afraid to die. His pleasures and enjoyments are sincere and unmixt, never disturbed with a handwriting upon the wall, nor with some secret qualms and misgivings of mind; he is not terrified with present dangers, at least not amazed and distracted with them. A man who is delivered from the fears of death fears nothing else in excess but God. And fear is so troublesome a passion, that nothing is more for the happiness of our lives than to be delivered from it.

2. As a consequence of this, an early preparation for death will support men under all the troubles and calamities of this life. There are so many troubles to which mankind are exposed in

this world, that no man must expect to escape them all; nay, there are a great many troubles which are unsupportable to human nature, which there can be no relief for in this world. The hopes and expectations of a better life are, in most cases, the safest retreat. A man may bear his present sufferings with some courage, when he knows that he shall quickly see an end of them, that death will put an end to them, and place him out of their reach. For, "there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest; there the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor; the small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master," *Job* iii. 17, 18, 19.

So that, in many cases, the thoughts and expectations of death is the only thing that can support us under present sufferings; but while the thoughts of death itself are terrible to us, this will be a poor comfort. Men who are under the sense of guilt are more afraid of death than they are of all the evils of this world. Whatever their present sufferings are, they are not so terrible "as lakes of fire and brimstone, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out." So that such men, while they are under the fears and terrors of death, have nothing to support them under present miseries. The next world, which death puts us into the possession of, is a very delightful prospect to good men; there they see the rewards of their labour and sufferings, of their faith and patience. They can suffer shame and reproach, and "take joyfully the spoiling of their goods;

“ since these light afflictions, which are but for a season, will work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” But men who are not prepared to die, while they are afraid of death, can find no relief in the thoughts of it, and therefore want the greatest support that we can have in this life against the sufferings of it. The sooner we prepare to die the sooner we are delivered from the fears of death; and then the hope of a better life will carry us cheerfully through this world, whatever storms we meet with.

3. Since we must certainly die, it makes it extremely reasonable to sacrifice our lives to God, whenever he calls for them; that is, rather to chuse to die a little before our time, than to renounce God, or to give his worship to idols, or any created beings or to corrupt the faith and religion of Christ. There are arguments indeed enough to encourage Christians to martyrdom, when God calls them to suffer for his sake: the love of Christ in dying for us is a sufficient reason why we should cheerfully die for him; and the great rewards of martyrdom, that glorious crown which is reserved for such conquerors, made the primitive Christians ambitious of it. It is certain there is no hurt in it; nay, that it is a peculiar favour to die for Christ, because those persons who are most dear to him were crowned with martyrdom. But our present argument shows us at what an easy rate we may purchase so glorious a crown, for we part with nothing for it; we die for God, and we must die whether we die martyrs or not; and what man then, who

knows he must die, and believes the rewards of martyrdom, can think it so terrible to die a martyr? No good Christian can think that he loses any thing by the bargain, to exchange this life for a better; for as many years as he gets sooner out of this world than he should have done by the course of Nature, so many years he gets sooner to heaven; and I suppose that is no great loss. It is, indeed, a noble expression of our love to God, our entire obedience and subjection to him, and of a perfect trust in him, to part with our lives for his sake; but what can a man, who knows he must die, do less for God than this, to part with a life which he cannot keep, willingly to lay down a life for God which would shortly be taken from him whether he will or not?

4. This shows us also what little reason we have to be afraid of the power of men. The utmost they can do is to kill the body, a mortal body, which will die whether they kill it or not; which is no mighty argument of power, no more than it is to break a brittle glass; nor any great hurt to us, no more than it is to die, which we are all born to, and which is no injury to a good man. And therefore our Saviour's counsel is very reasonable, *Luke xii. 4, 5.* "Be not afraid of them that kill
"the body, and after that have no more that
"they can do: but I will forewarn you whom
"you shall fear; fear him which, after he hath
"killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say
"unto you, fear him."

This is very reasonable, when the fear of God and men is opposed to each other, which is the

only case our Saviour supposes. No man ought foolishly to fling away his life, nor to provoke and affront princes, who have the power of life and death ; this is not to die like a martyr, but like a fool or a rebel. But when a prince threatens death, and God threatens damnation, then our Saviour's counsel takes place, not to fear men, but God ; for, indeed, God's power in this is equal to men's at least. Men can kill, for men are mortal, and may be killed ; and this is only for a mortal creature to die a little out of order : but God can kill too ; and thus far the case is the same. It is true, most men are of the mind, in such a case, rather to trust God than men ; because he does not always punish in this world, nor execute a speedy vengeance. And yet when our Saviour takes notice, that God kills as well as men, it seems to intimate to us, that such apostates, who rather chuse to provoke God than men, may meet with their deserts in this world ; for no man is secure that God will not punish him in this world ; and apostates, of all others, have least reason to expect it. Those who renounce God for fear of men are the fittest persons to be made examples of a sudden vengeance. But then, when men have killed, they can do no more, they cannot kill the soul. And here the power of God and man is very unequal ; for when he has killed, he can cast both body and soul into hell-fire. This is a very formidable power indeed, and we have reason to fear him ; but the power of men, who can only kill a mortal body, is not very terrible ; it ought not to frighten us into any sin,

which will make us obnoxious to that more terrible power which can destroy the soul.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the time of our Death, and the proper improvement of it.

LET us now consider the time of our Death; which is once, but when, uncertain.

Now, when I say the time of our death is uncertain, I need not tell you that I mean only it is uncertain to us; that is, that no man knows when he shall die: for God certainly knows all things; and therefore, with respect to the foreknowledge of God, the time of our death is certain.

Thus much is certain as to death, that we must all die; and it is certain also that death is not far off, because we know our lives are very short. Before the flood men lived many hundred years; but it is a great while now since the Psalmist observed, that the ordinary term of human life had very narrow bounds set to it: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away," *Psal. xc. 10.* There are some exceptions from this general rule; but this is the ordinary period of human life, when it is spun out to the greatest length: and, therefore, within this term we may reasonably ex-

pest it; for in the ordinary course of Nature our bodies are not made to last much longer.

Thus far we are certain: but then how much of this time we shall run out, how soon or how late we shall die, we know not; for we see no age exempted from death. Some expire in the cradle, and at their mother's breasts; others in the heat and vigour of youth; others survive to a decrepid old age, and, it may be, follow their whole family to their graves. Death very often surpriseth us when we least think of it, without giving us any warning of its approach; and that is proof enough that the time of our death is unknown and uncertain to us.

But these things deserve to be particularly discoursed: and therefore, with reference to the time of our death, I shall observe these four things, not so much to explain them, for most of them are plain enough of themselves, as to improve them for the government of our lives.

- I. That the general period of human life, which is the same thing with the time of our death, is fixed and determined by God.
- II. That the particular time of every man's death, though it be foreknown by God, who foreknows all things, yet it does not appear that it is peremptorily decreed and determined by God.
- III. That the particular time when any of us shall die is unknown and uncertain to us.
- IV. That we must die but once; "It is appointed for all men once to die,"

S E C T. I.

That the general period of life is fixed and determined by God, and that it is but very short.

I. **T**HAT the general period of human life, which is the same thing with the time of our death, is fixed and determined by God; that is, there is a time set to human life, beyond which no man shall live, as Job speaks, chap. xiv. 5. "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." Which does not refer to the period of every particular man's life, but is spoken of man in general, that there are fixed bounds set to human life which no man can exceed.

What these bounds are God has not expressly declared; but that must be learned from observation. Such a time as most commonly puts a period to men's lives who live longest may, generally, pass for the common measure of human life, though there may be some few exceptions.

Before the flood no man lived a thousand years; and therefore we may conclude, that the longest term of human life, after the sentence of death was passed on man, was confined within a thousand years. Methuselah, who was the longest liver, lived but nine hundred sixty-nine years, and

he died; so that no man ever lived a thousand years. And comparing this observation with that promise of a thousand years' reign with Christ, which is called the first resurrection, and is the portion only of martyrs and confessors, and pure and sincere Christians, *Rev. xx.* I have been apt to conclude, that to live a thousand years is the privilege only of immortal creatures; that if Adam had continued innocent, he should have lived no longer on earth, but have been translated to heaven without dying; for this thousand years' reign of the saints with Christ, whatever that signifies, seems to be intended as a reparation of that death which they fell under by Adam's sin. But then, those thousand years do not put an end to the happiness of these glorious saints, but they are immortal creatures; and though this reign with Christ continues but a thousand years, their happiness shall have no end, though the scene may change and vary; "for over such men the second death hath no power." Or else this thousand years' reign with Christ must signify an eternal and unchangeable kingdom, a thousand years being a certain earnest of immortality. But there is an unanswerable objection against that, because we read of the expiring of these thousand years, and what shall come after them, even the final judgment of all the world. But this is a great mystery, which we must not hope to understand till we see the blessed accomplishment of it.

But though before the flood some persons lived near a thousand years, yet after the flood the term of life was much shortened. Some think this was

done by God, when he pronounced that sentence, *Gen. iv. 3.* "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years:" as if God had then decreed that the life of man should not exceed an hundred and twenty years. But this does not agree with that account we have of men's lives after the flood; for not only Noah and his sons, who were in the ark, lived much longer than this after the flood; but Arphaxad lived five hundred and thirty years, Salah four hundred and three years, Eber four hundred and thirty years, and Abraham himself an hundred and seventy-five years: and therefore this hundred and twenty years cannot refer to the ordinary term of man's life, but to the continuance of God's patience with that wicked world, before he would bring the flood upon them, to destroy the corrupt generation of men; that is, that he should bear with them a hundred and twenty years before he would send the flood to destroy them. But afterwards, by degrees, life was shortened, insomuch that, though Moses himself lived a great deal longer, yet if the xth psalm was composed by him, as the title tells us it was, the ordinary term of life in his days was but threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, *ver. 10.* "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." And this has continued the ordinary measure of life ever since; which is so very short, that David

might well say, "Behold, thou hast made my
" days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as
" nothing before thee. Verily, every man in
" in his best estate is altogether vanity." *Psal.*
xxxix. 5.

I shall not scrupulously inquire into the reason of this great change, why our lives are reduced into so small a compass. Some will not believe that it was so, but think that there is a mistake in the manner of the account; that when they are said to live eight or nine hundred years, they computed their years by the moon, not by the sun; that is, their years were months, twelve of which make but one of our years: and then, indeed, the longest livers of them did not live so long as many men do at this day; for Methuselah himself, who lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, according to this computation of months for years, lived but fourscore years and five months. But it is very absurd to imagine that Moses would use two such different accounts of time, that sometimes by a year he should mean no more than a month, and sometimes twelve months, without giving the least notice of it, which is unpardonable in any historian. And therefore others complain much that they were not born in those days when the life of man was prolonged for so many hundred years; there had been some comfort in living then, when they enjoyed all the vigour and gaiety of youth, and could relish the pleasures of life, for seven, eight, or nine hundred years; a blessing which men would purchase at any rate in our days: but now we can scarce turn ourselves about

in the world, but we are admonished by gray hairs, or the sensible decays of nature, to prepare for our winding-sheet. And, therefore, for the farther improvement of this argument, I shall, (1.) Show you what little reason we have to complain of the shortness of life. (2.) What use we are to make of it.

S E C T. II.

What little reason we have to complain of the shortness of human life.

(1.) **W**HAT little reason we have to complain of the shortness of life, and the too hasty approaches of death to us. For, 1. Such a long life is not reconcileable with the present state of the world. And, 2. Our lives are long enough for all the wise purposes of living.

1. Such a long life is not reconcileable with the present state of the world. What the taste of the world was before the flood, in what manner they lived, and how they employed their time, we cannot tell, for Moses has given no account of it: but, taking the world as it is, and as we find it, I dare undertake to convince those men, who are most apt to complain of the shortness of life, that it would not be for the general happiness of mankind to have it much longer: for, 1st, The world is at present very unequally divided; some have nothing but what they earn by very hard labour,

or extort from other men's charity by their restless importunities, or gain by more ungodly arts. Now, though the rich and prosperous, who have the world at command, and live in ease and pleasure, would be very well contented to spend some hundred years in this world; yet I should think fifty or threescore years abundantly enough for slaves and beggars, enough to spend in hunger and want, in a gaol and a prison. And those who are so foolish as not to think this enough, owe a great deal to the wisdom and goodness of God that he does. So that the greatest part of mankind have great reason to be contented with the shortness of life, because they have no temptation to wish it longer.

2dly, The present state of this world requires a more quick succession. The world is pretty well peopled, and is divided among its present inhabitants; and but very few, in comparison, as I observed before, have any considerable share in the division. Now, let us but suppose that all our ancestors, who lived an hundred or two hundred years ago, were alive still, and possessed their old estates and honours, what had become of this present generation of men, who have now taken their places, and make as great a show and bustle in the world as they did? And if you look back three, or four, or five hundred years, the case is still so much the worse; the world would be over-peopled, and where there is one poor miserable man now, there must have been five hundred, or the world must have been common, and all men reduced to the same level; which, I be-

lieve, the rich and happy people, who are so fond of long life, would not like very well. This would utterly undo our young prodigal heirs, were their hopes of succession three or four hundred years off, who, as short as life is now, think their fathers make very little haste to their graves: this would spoil their trade of spending their estates before they have them, and make them live a dull sober life whether they would or no; and such a life, I know, they do not think worth having: and therefore, I hope, at least, they will not make the shortness of their fathers' lives an argument against Providence. And yet such kind of sparks as these are commonly the wits that set up for atheism, and, when it is put into their heads, quarrel with every thing which they fondly conceive will waken the belief of a God and a Providence; and, among other things, with the shortness of life, which they have little reason to do, when they so often outlive their estates.

3dly, The world is very bad as it is; so bad that good men scarce know how to spend fifty or threescore years in it: but consider how bad it would probably be were the life of man extended to six, seven, or eight hundred years. If so near a prospect of the other world as forty or fifty years cannot restrain men from the greatest villainies, what would they do if they could as reasonably suppose death to be three or four hundred years off? If men make such improvements in wickedness in twenty or thirty years, what would they do in hundreds? and what a blessed place then would this world be to live in! We see

in the old world, when the life of man was drawn out to a great length, the wickedness of mankind grew so insufferable, that it repented God he had made man; and he resolved to destroy that whole generation, excepting Noah and his family. And the most probable account that can be given how they came to grow so universally wicked, is the long and prosperous lives of such wicked men, who by degrees corrupted others, and they others, till there was but one family left, and no other remedy left but to destroy them all, leaving only that righteous family, as the seed and future hopes of the new world.

And when God had determined in himself, and promised to Noah, never to destroy the world again, by such an universal destruction, till the last and final judgment, it was necessary, by degrees, to shorten the lives of men, which was the most effectual means to make them more governable, and to remove bad examples out of the world; which would hinder the spreading of the infection, and people and reform the world again by new examples of piety and virtue. For, when there are such quick successions of men, there are few ages but have some great and brave examples, which give a new and better spirit to the world.

Many other things might be added, to convince those who complain of the shortness of human life, that it would be no desirable thing, as the state of the world now is, to live seven or eight hundred years in it. But this, I suppose, is enough, if I can make good the second thing I proposed, That our lives are long enough for all the wise purposes of living.

Now, I will not promise myself to satisfy all men in this matter; for those that think it the only end of living to eat and drink, and enjoy the more impure delights of flesh and sense, will never be satisfied that threescore and ten years are as good as eight or nine hundred for this purpose; for the longer they enjoy these pleasures, and the oftner they repeat them, the better it is. But these men ought to be convinced that this is not the true end of living; that these are only means to preserve life, which God hath sweetened with such proper satisfactions, or made the neglect of them so uneasy and painful, that no man might forget to take care to preserve himself. But man was made at first for higher and nobler ends; and since, by the sin of Adam, we are all become mortal, this life is not for itself, but in order to a better life.

We come into this world not to stay here, or take up our abode and rest; for then, indeed, the longer we lived the better: but this world is only a state of trial and discipline, to exercise our virtues, to perfect our minds, to prepare and qualify ourselves for the more pure, and refined, and spiritual, enjoyments of the other world. We come into this world, not so much to enjoy as to conquer it, and to triumph over it, to baffle its temptations, to despise its flatteries, and to endure its terrors: and if we live long enough to do this, we live long enough, and ought to thank God that our work, and labour, and temptations, are at an end. For what labouring man is not glad that his work is over, and he may go to rest?

what mariner is not glad that he has weathered all storms, and steered a safe course to his desired haven?

There are two things necessary to the improvement of our minds, knowledge and virtue: and as God hath shortened our lives, so he has shortened our work too, and given us a more easy and compendious way to both.

Knowledge, indeed, is an infinite and endless thing; and it is impossible thoroughly to satisfy that appetite in great and generous minds in this blind and obscure state of life; but the comfort is, all the knowledge that is necessary to carry us to heaven is now plain and easy, and will not take up many years to learn it; for "this is life eternal, to know God, and Christ Jesus whom he hath sent;" which is plainly revealed to us in the gospel. And, when we get to heaven, we shall quickly understand all the difficulties of Nature and Providence in another manner than the greatest philosophers do now, or can do, tho' they should live many hundred years.

And as for virtue, we have as short and easy a way to it: the plainest and most perfect precepts, the most admirable examples, the most encouraging and inviting promises, and, which is more than all, the most powerful assistances of the Divine Spirit to renew and sanctify us: and he who is not reformed by those divine and supernatural methods of grace in forty or fifty years, is not likely to be the better for them though he should live to Methuselah's age:

As for doing good, I confess, the longer a good man lives, the more good he will do, and make himself the more useful to the world. But this is God's care; and whenever he calls him out of the world, he excuses him from doing any more good in it.

The truth is, nothing could be more improper under the state of the gospel than such a long life as worldly men are very fond of. For our Saviour has taught us to expect persecution and sufferings for his name; and this is very often the portion of true and sincere Christians; so that St Paul could say, "If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable." Thanks be to God it is not always so: but when it is, it would be too great a temptation for human nature to live some hundred years in persecution, as they might, if they and the persecuting prince should live so long.

Nay, such a long life as men talk of would greatly weaken the promises and threatenings of the gospel, which are all absent and unseen things, to be expected in the other world. But if the next world were so many hundred years off, both the promises and threatenings of it would lose their effect upon the generality of mankind.

Nay, it may be thought very hard upon good men, who are taught by the gospel of Christ to live above this world, to have a very mean opinion of it, and a great indifferency to all the delights of it, to live so many hundred years in it, not so much to enjoy it, as to despise it, and to contend with it. And it is no less hard for men

who are transported with the ravishing hopes and expectations of a better life, whose hearts and conversations are already in heaven, to be kept so long out of it. This is a severe trial of their patience; for hope, when it is so long delayed, is a very troublesome and uneasy passion: and though few men long to die, yet a great many good men do very impatiently long to be in heaven, and can be contented, whenever God pleases, to submit to dying, though with some natural reluctance, that they may get to heaven.

In short, this life is long enough for a race, for a warfare, for a pilgrimage: it is long enough to fight and contend with this world, and all the temptations of it: it is long enough to know this world, to discover the vanity of it, and to live above it. It is long enough, by the grace of God, to purge and refine our minds, and to prepare ourselves to live for ever in God's presence. And when we are in any measure prepared for heaven, and possessed with great and passionate desires of it, we shall think it a great deal too long to be kept out of it.

S E C T. III.

What use to make of the fixed term of human life.

(2.) **L**ET us consider what wise use is to be made of this. And here are two things distinctly to be considered: 1, That the general

term of human life is fixed and determined by God. 2. That this common term and period of life, at the utmost extent of it, is but very short.

1. That the general term of human life is fixed and determined by God. And this is capable of very wise improvements. For,

1st, When we know that we cannot live above threescore or fourscore years, or some few years over or under, we should not extend our hopes, and expectations, and designs, beyond this term. 2^{dly}, We should frequently count our days, and observe how our lives waste, and draw near to eternity.

3^{dly}, When this period draws nigh, and death comes within view, it more especially concerns us to apply ourselves to a more serious and solemn preparation for death.

1st, We should not extend our hopes, and expectations, and designs, beyond this term; which God has fixed for the conclusion of our lives; we should not live as if we were immortal creatures, who are never to die: for if God hath set bounds to our lives, it is absurd for us to expect to live any longer, unless we hope to alter the decrees of Heaven.

And yet it is more absurd, if it be possible, to extend our hopes and desires, our projects and designs, for this world beyond the term of our living here. For how unreasonable is it to trouble ourselves about this world longer than we are to continue in it? And yet, if this were observed, it would ease us of a great deal of labour and care, and deliver the world from great troubles and disorders, which the designs and projects of future ages create.

Men might see some end of their labours and of their cares, of increasing riches, and adding house to house, and field to field, did they stint their desires with their lives; did they consider how long they were to live, and what is a sufficient and necessary provision for their continuance here. Whereas now the generality of mankind drudge on to the last moment they have to live, and heap up riches till they know no end of them, as if their lives, and their enjoyments of them, were to have no end neither.

The only tolerable excuse that can be made for this is the care of posterity, to leave a liberal provision for children, that they may live happily after us. But this, indeed, is rather an excuse than a reason; for thus we see it is when there is no such reason for it, when men have no children to provide for, nor, it may be, any relations for whom they are much concerned; or when they have a sufficient provision for all their children to encourage their industry and virtue, though not to maintain them in idleness and vice, which no wise and good father would desire: nay, it may be, when they have no other heir to an overgrown estate, but either a daughter, whose fortune may make her a rich prey, as is too often seen; or a prodigal son, who is ruined already by the expectation of so great a fortune, and will quickly be even with his fortune, and ruin that when he has it.

A competent provision for children is a just reason to continue our industry, though we have enough for ourselves as long as we live; but to make them rich and great is not. The piety and

charity of parents, which entail a blessing upon their posterity, and an industrious and virtuous education of children, is a better inheritance for them than a great estate. But men, who are so intent to the very last upon increasing their estates, seldom do it for any other reason but to satisfy their own insatiable thirst, which is to hoard up riches for a time when they cannot enjoy them, to provide for their living in this world a much longer time than they know they can possibly live in it. This is much greater folly than the man in the parable was guilty of, whose ground brought forth plentifully, and he pulled down his barns, and built greater, and said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." He was so wise as to know when he had enough, and when he was fit to retire and take his ease: yet God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; and then whose shall all these things be which thou hast provided?" *Luke xii. 16, &c.*

Thus, how big are men with projects and designs, which there is little hope should ever take effect while they live! especially aspiring monarchs and busy politicians, who draw the scheme, and frame their design, of an universal empire through a long series of events, or meditate changes and alterations of government, of the laws and religion of a nation, by insensible steps and methods; which, though it were ever so hopeful a project, they cannot hope to live to see effected and therefore exceed their own bounds, and trouble

the world at present with what no body now living may ever be concerned in: they undertake to govern the world when they are dead and gone; whereas every age brings forth new scenes of affairs, and a new set of politicians. Would men but confine their cares and projects within the bounds of their own lives, and mind only what concerns themselves and their own times, they would live more at ease, and the world enjoy more peace and quiet than now it is ever likely to do. And yet one would think this very reasonable, not to concern ourselves about the world any longer than we are like to live in it; to do no injury to posterity, as near as we can, and to do what good we can for them, without disturbing the present peace and good government of the world; but to leave the care of the next age to those who shall succeed, and to that good Providence which takes care of all ages and generations of men.

2dly, Since we know the common period of human life, we should frequently count our days, and observe how our lives waste, and draw near to eternity. Our time slides away insensibly, and few men take notice how it goes; they find their strength and vigour continue without any decay, and they reckon upon living threescore and ten or fourscore years; but seldom consider that, it may be, thirty or forty years are already gone, that is, the best half of our lives; they put a cheat upon themselves, by computing the whole duration of their lives, without considering how much of this is already past, and how little of it is to come; which if men should seriously think of, they would

not be so apt to flatter themselves with a long life; for no man accounts twenty or thirty years a long life, and that is the most they have to live now, though they should attain to the longest period of human life; much less could they flatter themselves with a long life, when they, probably, could not reckon above fifteen or ten years to come. And would men observe how their life shortens every day, this, if any thing, would make them grow chary of their time, and begin to think of living, that is, of minding the true ends and purposes of life, of doing the work for which they came into the world, and which they must do before they die, or they are miserable for ever.

3dly, When men draw near the end of their reckoning, nay, it may be, are past the common reckoning of mankind, it more especially concerns them to apply themselves to a more serious and solemn preparation for death. For how vigorous soever their age is, death cannot be far off; it would be unpardonable in them to be deceived with the hopes of living much longer, who have already attained to the common period of human life, and are in the borders and confines, nay, in the very quarters, of death, and have already, if I may so speak, borrowed some years from the other world.

Now, when I speak of such men's preparing for death, I do not mean that they should then begin to think of dying; that is a great deal of the latest to begin such a work; though, if they have not done it before, it is, without doubt, high time to begin it then, in the last minute of their

lives, and to do what they can, in that little time that remains, to obtain their pardon from God for spending a long life in sin and vanity, and in a forgetfulness of their Maker and Redeemer.

But that which I now intend concerns those who have thought of dying long before, and governed their lives under the conduct and influence of such thoughts: and, therefore, are not wholly unprepared for death, but are ready to welcome it whenever it comes: but there is a decent way of meeting death, which becomes such men, which I call a more solemn preparation for it; that is, when their condition and circumstances of life will permit it, to take a timely leave of the world, and to withdraw from the noise and business of it; when they are placed just in the confines of both worlds, to direct their faces wholly to that world whither they are going, to spend the little remains of their lives in conversing with themselves, with God, and with the other world.

First, In conversing with themselves, which, God knows, very few men do while they are engaged in the business of this world. The cares of life, or the pleasures of it, our families, or our friends, or strangers themselves, take us from ourselves; and therefore it is fit, before men go out of this world, that they should recover the possession of themselves, and grow a little more acquainted and intimate with themselves; that they should retire from the world to take a more thorough review of their lives and actions, what they have still to do, to make their peace with God and their own consciences; whether there

be not any sin which they have not thoroughly repented of, and heartily begged God's pardon for; any injury they have done their neighbour, for which they have not made sufficient restitution and reparation; whether they have any quarrel with any man, which is not composed and reconciled; whether there is any part of their duty which they have formerly too much neglected, as charity to the poor, the wise education and institution of their children and families, and to apply themselves to a more diligent discharge of it; what distempers there are in their minds which still need to be rectified; what graces are weakest, what passions are most disorderly and unmortified, and to apply proper remedies to them.

This is an excellent preparation for death, because it will give us great hope and assurance in dying; it gives us peace and satisfaction in our own minds, by a thorough knowledge of our own state, and by rectifying whatever was amiss; it delivers our consciences from guilty fears, and disarms death of stings and terrors: for the sting of death is sin; and when this sting is pulled out, we have nothing else to contend with but some little natural aversions to dying, which are more easily conquered.

Thus, in this preparatory retirement from the world, we should spend great portions of our time in the worship of God, in our public and private devotions; for commonly men of business are very much in arrears with God upon this account; in their active age they had little time to spare, or little mind to spare it, for the uses of

religion : and, therefore, we may well retire some time before we die to make up that defect, and, when we have done with this world, to give up ourselves wholly to the service of God. We should now be very importunate in our prayers to God, that, for the merits and intercession of Christ, he would freely pardon all the sins, and frailties, and errors, of our past life, and give us such a comfortable hope and sense of his love to us as may support us in the hour of death, and sweeten the terrors and agonies of it. We should meditate on the great love of God in sending Christ into the world to save sinners, and contemplate the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of that love of God which passeth all human understanding. We should represent to ourselves the wonderful condescension of the Son of God in becoming man, his amazing goodness in dying for sinners, the just for the unjust, to reconcile us to God. And when we have warmed our souls with such thoughts as these, we should break forth into raptures and ecstasies of devotion, in the praise of our Maker and Redeemer: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever." *Rev. v. 12, 13.*

And, besides other reasons which make this a very proper preparation for death, this accustoms us to the work and employment of the next world; for heaven is a life of devotion and praise; there-

we shall see God, and admire and adore him, and sing eternally hallelujahs to him. And therefore nothing can so dispose and prepare us for heaven as to have our hearts ready tuned to the praises of God, ravished with his love, transported with his glory and perfection, and swallowed up in the most profound and humble adorations of him.

Thus, when we are going into another world, it becomes us most to have our thoughts there; to consider what a blessed place that is, where we shall be delivered from all the fears, and sorrows, and temptations, of this world; where we shall see God and the blessed Jesus, and converse with angels and glorified spirits, and live an endless life, without fear of dying; where there is nothing but perfect love and peace; no cross interests and factions to contend with, no storms to ruffle or discompose our joy and rest to all eternity; where there is no pain, no sickness, no labour, no care to refresh the weariness or to repair the decays of a mortal body, not so much as the image of death to interrupt our constant enjoyments; where there is a perpetual day, and an eternal calm; where our souls shall attain their utmost perfection in knowledge and virtue; where we shall serve God, not with dull, and sleepy, and unaffecting devotions, but with piercing thoughts, with life and vigour, with ravishment and transport: in a word, where there are such things "as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

These are proper thoughts for a man who is to compose himself for death; not to think of the

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pale and ghastly looks of death, when he shall be wrapt up in his winding-sheet; not to think of the dark and melancholy retirements of the grave, where his body shall rot and putrify, till it be raised up again immortal and glorious; but to lift up his eyes to heaven, to view that lightsome and happy country; with Moses to ascend up into the mount, to take a prospect of the heavenly Canaan whither he is going. This will conquer even the natural aversion to death, and make us, with St Paul, desirous to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all; make it as easy to us to leave this world for heaven as it is to remove into a more pleasant and wholesome air, or into a more convenient and beautiful house. So easy, so pleasant, will it be to die with such thoughts as these about us.

This indeed ought to be the constant exercise of the Christian life; it is fit for all times, and for all persons; and without some degree of it, it is impossible to conquer the temptations of the world, or to live in the practice of divine and heavenly virtues. But this ought to be the constant business, or entertainment rather, of those happy men who have lived long enough in the world, to take a fair leave of it; who have run through all the scenes and stages of human life, and have now death and another world in view and prospect.

And it is this makes a retirement from the world so necessary, or very useful; not merely to ease our bodily labours, and to get a little rest from business, to dissolve in sloth and idleness, or to wander about to seek a companion, or to hear news, or to

talk politics, or to find out some way to spend time, which now lyes upon our hands, and is more uneasy and troublesome to us than business was. This is a more dangerous state, and does more indispose us for a happy death, than all the cares and troubles of an active life: but we must retire from this world, to have more leisure and greater opportunities to prepare for the next, to adorn and cultivate our minds, and dress our souls like a bride who is adorned to meet her bridegroom.

When men converse much in this world, and are distracted with the cares and business of it; when they live in a crowd of customers or clients, and are hurried from their shops to the Exchange or Customhouse, or from their chambers to the bar; and, when they have discharged one obligation, are pressed hard by another, so that at night they have hardly spirits left to say their prayers, nor any time for them in the morning; and the Lord's day itself is thought more proper for rest and refreshment than devotion; I say, what dull, cold apprehensions must such men have of another world! and, after all the care we can take, how will this world insinuate itself into our affections, when it employs our time and thoughts, when our whole business is buying and selling, and driving good bargains, and making conveyances and settlements of estates! how will this disorder our passions, occasion feuds and quarrels, give us a tincture of pride, ambition, covetousness! that there is work enough after a busy life, even for very good men, to wash out these stains and pollutions, and to get the taste and relish of this

world out of their mouths, and to revive and quicken the sense of God and of another world.

This is a sufficient reason for such men, as I observed before, to think when it is time to leave off, and, if not wholly to withdraw from the world, yet to contract their business, and to have the command of it, that they may have more leisure to take care of their souls, before they have so near a call and summons to death; but much more necessary is it, when death is even at the door, and, by the course of Nature, we know that it is so.

It is very proper to leave the world before we are removed out of it, that we may know how to live without it, that we may not carry any hankerings after this world with us into the next: and therefore it is very fitting that there should be a kind of middle state between this world and the next; that is, that we should withdraw from this world, and wean ourselves from it, even while we are in it; which will make it more easy to part with this world, and make us more fit to go to the next. But it seems strangely indecent, unless the necessities of their families, or the necessity of the public, call for it and exact it, to see men who are just a going out of the world, who, it may be, bow as much under their riches as under their age, plunging themselves over head and ears in this world, courting new honours and preferments with as much zeal as those who are but entering into the world. It is to be feared such men think very little of another world, and will never be satisfied with earth till they are buried in it.

S E C T. IV.

What use to make of the shortness of human life.

(3.) **A**S the general period of human life is fixed and determined by God; so this term of life, at the utmost extent of it, is but very short. For what are threescore and ten, or fourscore years? how soon do they pass away like a dream? and, when they are gone, how few and empty do they appear? The best way to be sensible of this is not to look forward, for we fancy time to come to be much longer than we find it; but to look backward upon the time which is past, and as long as we can remember, and how suddenly are thirty or forty years gone! how little do we remember how they are past! but gone they are, and the rest are going apace, while we eat, and drink, and sleep; and when they are gone too we shall be sensible that all together was but very short. Now, from hence I shall observe several things of very great use for the government of our lives.

1. If our lives be so very short, it concerns us to lose none of our time: for, does it become us to be prodigal of our time when we have so little of it? We either ought to make as much of our lives as we can, or not complain that they are short; for that is a greater reproach to ourselves than to the order of Nature, and the providence of God; for it seems we have more time than we

care to live in, more than we think necessary to improve to the true ends and purposes of living : and if we can spare so much of our lives, it seems they are too long for us, how short soever they are in themselves. And when our lives are too long already for the generality of mankind to improve wisely, why should God give us more time to play with and to squander away ? And yet let us all reflect upon ourselves, and consider how much of our lives we have perfectly lost ; how careless we have been of our time, which is the most precious thing in the world ; how we have given it to every body that will take it, and given away so much of ourselves and our own being with it.

Should men sit down, and take a review of themselves, and draw up a particular account of the expense of their time, after they came to years of discretion and understanding, what a shameful bill would it be ! what unreasonable abatements of life ! how little time would there be at the foot of the account which might be called living !

So much extraordinary for eating, and drinking, and sleeping, beyond what the support and refreshment of nature required ; so much in courtship, wantonness, and lust ; so much in drinking and revelling ; so much for the recovery of the last night's debauch : so much in gaming and masquerades ; so much in paying and receiving formal and impertinent visits, in idle and extravagant discourses, in censuring and reviling our neighbours or our governors ; so much in dressing and adorning our bodies ; so many blank and long parentheses of life, wasted in doing nothing,

or in counting the slow and tedious minutes, or chiding the sun for making no more haste down, and delaying their evening assignations. But how little would there appear, in most men's account, spent to the true end of living?

The very naming of these things is sufficient to convince any considering man, that this is really a mispending of time, and a flinging away great part of a very short life to no purpose. But, to make you all sensible of this, consider, with me, when we may be said to lose our time; for time passes away very swiftly, and we can no more hold it than we can stop the chariot-wheels of the sun. But all time that is past is not lost; indeed, no time is our own but what is past or present; and its being past makes it never the less our own. if ever it was so. But then, we lose our time,

1st, When it turns to no account to us when it is gone, when we are never the better for it in body or soul. This is the true way of judging, by our own sense and feeling, whether we have spent our time well or ill, by observing what relish it leaves upon our minds, and what the effects of it are when it is past. How vainly soever men spend their time, they find some pleasure, and diversion, and entertainment, in it while it lasts; but the next morning it is all vanished, as their night-dreams are; and if they are not the worse for it, they find themselves never the better. And this is a certain sign that our time was vainly and foolishly spent, that when it is gone it can be brought into no account of our lives but that of idle expenses. Whatever is good, whatever is in

any degree useful, leaves some satisfaction when it is gone; and time so spent we can place to our account, and all such time is not lost: but men who spend one day after another in mirth, and jollity, and entertainments, in visits, or gaming, &c. can give no other account of it, but that it is a pleasant way of spending time. And that is the true name for it, not living, but spending time, which they know not how otherwise to pass away. When their time is spent, they have all they intended, and their enjoyments pass away with their time, and there is an end of both: and it were somewhat more tolerable if they themselves could end with their time too. But when men must outlive time, and the effects of time must last to eternity, that time, which, if it has no ill, yet has no good, effects more lasting than itself, is utterly lost.

2^{dly}, To be sure that time is doubly lost which we cannot review without amazement and horror; I mean, in which we have contracted some great guilt; which we have not only spent vainly, but wickedly, which we ourselves wish had never been, which we desire to forget, and could be glad that both God and man could forget it too. For is not that lost time which loses us, which undoes us, which distracts us with guilty fears, which we would give all the world we could lose out of the account of our lives, and could lose the very remembrance of it? I think that somewhat worse than lost time which forfeits a blessed eternity, and for which men must lose their souls for ever.

3^{dly}, That is lost time too which men must live

over again, and tread back their steps, like him that has mistaken his way. Not that we can recall our past time, and those minutes that are fled from us; but we must substitute some of our remaining time in its room, and begin our lives again, and undo what we had formerly done. This is the case of those who have spent great part of their lives ill, whenever they are convinced of their folly and danger: they must give all their past lives for lost; and, it may be, when half, or two-thirds, or more, of their lives are spent, they must then begin to live, and to undo, by repentance and reformation, the errors, and follies, and impieties, of their former lives. Now, I suppose all men will confess that time to be lost which they must unlive again: to be sure penitents are very sensible it is; and I wish all those would consider it, who resolve to spend their youthful and vigorous age in sin, and to repent hereafter; that is, they resolve to fling away the greatest and the best part of their lives, and to begin to live when they see themselves a-dying. This, I am sure, is no remedy against a short life to resolve not to live one-third of it.

2. Since our life is so very short, it becomes us to live as much as we can in so short a time: for we must not measure the length or shortness of our lives by the days, or months, or years; this is the measure of our duration, or being: but to live and to be are two things, and of a distinct consideration and account.

To live, when we speak of a man, signifies to act like a reasonable creature, to exercise his un-

derstanding and will upon such objects as answer the dignity and perfection of human nature; to be employed in such actions as are proper to his nature, and distinguish a man from all other creatures. And, therefore, though a man must eat and drink, and perform the other offices of a natural life, which are common to him with beasts, yet this is not to live like a man, any otherwise than as these common actions are governed by reason and rules of virtue: but he who minds nothing higher than this lives like a beast, not like a man. A life of reason, religion, and virtue, is properly the life of a man, because it is peculiar to him, and distinguishes him from all the other creatures in this world; and therefore he who improves his knowledge and understanding most, who has his passions under the best government, who does most good, and makes himself most useful to the world, though he does not continue longer, yet he lives more and longer than other men; that is, he exerts more frequent and perfect acts of a rational life.

But, besides this, this life is only in order to a better life; it is not for itself, but only a passage to, and a state of trial and probation for, immortality; and it were hardly worth the while to come into the world on any meaner design. And therefore he lives most who improves the grace of God to make himself most fit for heaven, and qualified for the greatest rewards, for the richest and brightest crowns; who knows God most, and worships him in the most perfect manner, with the greatest ravishments and transport of spirit; who lives most above this world, in the exercise

of the most divine virtues; who does most service to God in the world, and improves all his talents to the best advantage; in a word, who most adorns and perfects his own mind, brings most glory to God, and does most good to men. Such a man at thirty years old has lived more, nay, indeed, may properly be said to have lived longer, than an old decrepit sinner; for he has not lived at all to the purposes of a man, or to the ends of the other world. That man has lived a great while, how short soever the time be, who is old enough for heaven and for eternity, who has laid up riches and glorious treasures for himself in the other world, who has answered the ends of his life, and is fit to remove out of it. This is the true way of measuring our lives, by acts of piety and virtue, by our improvements in knowledge, and grace, and wisdom, by our ripeness for another world. And therefore, if we would live a great while in this world, we must *1st*, Begin to live betimes. *2dly*, We must have a care of all interruptions and intermissions of life. *3dly*, We must live apace.

1st, We must begin to live betimes; that is, we must begin betimes to live like men and like Christians, to live to God and to another world; that is, in a word, to be good betimes: for those who begin to live with the first bloomings of reason and understanding, and give early and youthful specimens of piety and virtue; if they reach to old age, they live three times as long as those who count indeed as many years as they do, but, it may be, have not lived a third of their time,

but have lost it in sin and folly. The first can look back to the very beginning of his life, and enjoy all his past years still, review them with pleasure and satisfaction, and bring them all to account. But a late penitent must date his life from his repentance and reformation: he dares look no farther back, for all beyond is lost, or worse than lost: it is like looking back upon the rude chaos, which was nothing but confusion and darkness, before God formed the world: such is the life of a sinner before this new birth and new creation: and therefore he has but a very little way to look back, can give but a very short account of his life, has but a very few years of his life which he dares own, and carry into the other world with him.

2dly, We must have a care of all interruptions and intermissions of life; that is, of falling back into sin again after some hopeful beginnings. This is often seen, that those who, by the care, and good government, and wise instructions, of parents and tutors, have had the principles of virtue and piety early instilled into them, and have had a good relish of it themselves; yet, when they are got loose from these restraints, and fall into ill company, and into the way of temptations, have a mind to try another kind of life, and to taste those pleasures which they see mankind so fond of, and too often try so long, till they grow as great strangers to piety and virtue as they were ignorant of vice before. Now, if such men ever be reclaimed again, yet all their early beginnings of life are lost; for here is a long interrup-

tion and intermission of life, which sets them back in the account of eternity. And thus it is proportionably in every wilful sin we commit; it makes a break in our lives; does not only stop our progress for a while, but sets us backward. But he who begins betimes to live without any, or very few and very short, interruptions, will be able to reckon a very long life, by that time he attains to the common period of human life.

3dly, Especially if we live apace. There is a living apace, as some call it, not to lengthen but to shorten life; when men, by minding their business well, can, in ten or twenty years, destroy such a constitution of body, and exhaust that vital heat and vigour, which would have lasted another man sixty or eighty years. This is to live much into little time, and to make an end of their lives quickly: and the living apace I mean, is to live much also in a little time, but to double and treble our lives, not to shorten them; that is, to do all the good that ever we can; for the more good we do the more we live. Life is not mere duration, but action: time is not life, but we live, that is, we act in time; and he who does two days' work in one, lives as much in one day as other men do in two. He who in one year does as much improve his mind in knowledge, and wisdom, and all Christian graces and virtues, worships God as much, and more devoutly, does as much good to the world in all conditions and relations of life, as another man does in two, or three, or four; he lives so much proportionably longer than those other men; he does the work

of so much time; and this is equivalent to, nay, much better, than living so much time. For he who can have the reward of two or three hundred years in this world, and not live above threescore or fourscore here, I take to be a much happier man than he who spends two hundred years in this world. This is the best way of lengthening our lives, by living doubly or trebly; which will make a vast addition to our lives in fifty or sixty years: and then there will be no reason to complain of the shortness of them.

3. If our lives are so very short, as most men complain they are, surely we have little reason to complain of spending the whole of these short lives in the service of God for an eternal reward. What are threescore or fourscore years when compared to an eternity? And therefore setting aside all the present advantages and pleasures of a life of religion, that this is only to live, to improve and perfect our own natures, to serve God, and to do good in the world. Suppose there were nothing in religion but hardships and difficulties, a perpetual force and violence to nature, a constant war with the world and the flesh; cannot we endure all this so short a time for an endless reward? Men think their day's work very well spent, when they receive their wages at night, and can go home and sup cheerfully with their family, and sleep sweetly, as labouring men use to do, all night; and yet our Saviour compares all the work and industry of our lives to day labourers, in the parable of the householder, who at several hours of the day hired labourers to work

in his vineyard, and paid them their wages at night, *Matt. xx. 1, &c.*

We all confess, that threescore and ten years, if we live so long, is but a very short time in itself, and quickly passes away; I am sure we all think so when it is gone: and yet, consider, how much of this time is cut off by infancy, childhood, and youth, while we are under the care and conduct of parents and governors, and are not our own men. How much is spent in sleeping, in eating and drinking, and necessary diversions, for the support and repair of these mortal bodies; in our necessary business, to provide for our families, or to serve the public? which God allows and requires of us, and accounts it serving himself, while we live like men, are sober, and temperate, and just, and faithful to our trust; which we should do for our own sakes, and which all well-governed societies require of us, without any consideration of another world: so that there is but very little of this very short life spent purely in the service of God, and in the care of our souls, and the concerns of a future state: and is this too much for an eternity of bliss and happiness? To complain of sobriety, and temperance, and moral honesty, as such insufferable burdens, that a man had better be damned than submit to them, is not so much to complain of the laws of God, as of all the wise governments in the world, even in the Heathen world, which branded all these vices with infamy, and restrained and corrected them with condign punishment: it is to complain of human nature, which has made all

these vices infamous, and to think it better to be damned than to live like men. And yet, above two-thirds of our time require the exercise of few other virtues but these; and whatever difficulties men may imagine in other acts of religion, if they can possibly think it so intolerable to love the greatest and the best Being; to praise and adore him to whom we owe ourselves and all we have; to ask the supply of our wants from him, who will be sure to give if we faithfully ask; to raise our hearts above this world, which is a scene of vanity, emptiness, or misery; and to delight ourselves in the hopes and expectations of great and eternal happiness, wherein the very life of religion consists: I say, if these be such very difficult and uneasy things, (which one would wonder how they came to be difficult, or why they should be thought so), yet they employ very little of our time; and, methinks, a man might bear it to be happy for ever. I am sure men take a great deal more pains for this world than heaven would cost them; and when they have it, do not live to enjoy it. And if this be thought worth their while, surely a short life spent in the service of God, to obtain an endless and eternal happiness, is the best and most advantageous spending our time. And we must have a very mean opinion of heaven and eternal happiness, if we think it not worth the obedience and service of a few years, how difficult soever that were.

4. If our lives are so very short at their utmost extent, the sinful pleasures of this world can be no great temptation, when compared to an eter-

nity of happiness or misery. Those sensual pleasures, which men are so fond of, and for the sake of which they break the laws of God, and provoke his justice, forfeit immortal life, and expose themselves to all the miseries and sufferings of eternal death, can last no longer than we live in this world; and how little a while is that? When we put off these bodies, all bodily pleasures perish with them: nay, indeed, as our bodies die and decay by degrees, before they tumble into the grave, so do our pleasures sensibly decay too. As short as our lives are, men may outlive some of their most beloved vices; and, therefore, how luxurious soever they may be, such short and dying pleasures ought not to come in competition with eternal happiness or misery. Whatever things are in their own nature, the value of them increases or diminishes according to the length or shortness of their enjoyments: that which will last our lives, and make them easy and comfortable, is to be preferred by wise men before the most ravishing enjoyments of a day; and a happiness which would outlast their lives, and reach to eternity, is to be preferred before the perishing enjoyments of a short life; unless men can think it better to be happy for threescore years than for ever; nay, unless men think the enjoyment of threescore years a sufficient recompense for eternal want and misery.

5. The shortness of our lives is a sufficient answer to all those arguments against Providence taken from the prosperity of bad men, and the miseries and afflictions of the good; for both of

them are so short, that they are nothing in the account of eternity. Were this life to be considered by itself, without any relation to a future state, the difficulty would be greater, but not very great; because a short happiness, or short misery, chequered and intermixed, as all the happiness and miseries of this life are, is not very considerable, nor were it worth the while either to make objections against Providence, or to answer them, if death put an end to us.

Bad men, who make these objections against Providence, are very well contented to take the world as they find it, so they may have it without a Providence; which is a sign that it is not their dislike of this world (though many times they suffer as much in it as good men do) which makes them quarrel at Providence, but the dread and fear of another world. And this proves that they think this world a very tolerable place, whether there be a Providence or not. And if so short a life as this is be but tolerable, it is a sufficient justification of Providence, that this life is well enough for its continuance; a very mixed and imperfect state indeed, but very short too; such a state as bad men themselves would like very well without another life after it, and such a state as good men like very well with another life to follow. It is not a spite at human life which makes them reject a Providence, as any one would guess who hears them object their own prosperity, and the calamities of good men, as arguments against Providence, both which they like very well. And whatever there may be in these objections, supposing there

were no other life after this, yet, when they all vanish at the very naming of another life, where good men shall be rewarded, and the wicked punished, it is ridiculous, to prove that there is no other life after this, because rewards and punishments are not dispensed with that exact justice in this life, as we might suppose God would observe, if there were no other life. To prove that there is no other life after this, because good and bad men do not receive their just rewards in this life, is an argument which becomes the wit of an atheist, for they must first take it for granted that there is no Providence before this argument can prove any thing. For if there be a Providence, then the prosperity of bad men, and the sufferings of the good, is a much better argument that there is another life after this, where rewards and punishments shall be more equally distributed. Thus, when we dispute against Providence from the prosperity of bad men, and the calamities of the good, before this can prove any thing, they must take it for granted that there is no other life after this, where good men shall be rewarded, and the wicked punished; for, if there be, it is easy enough to justify the providence of God as to the present prosperity of bad men, and the sufferings of the good. So that they must, of necessity, dispute in a circle, as the Papists do between the church and the scriptures, when they either prove that there is no Providence, or no life after this, from the unequal rewards and punishments of good and bad men in this world: for, in effect, they prove that there is no Providence, because there is no life

after this; or that there is no life after this, because there is no Providence. For the prosperity of bad men, and the sufferings of the good, proves neither of them, unless you take the other for granted: and if you will prove them both by this medium, you must take them both for granted by turns; and this is the easier and safer way, to take them both for granted, without exposing yourselves to the scorn of wise men by such kind of proofs. But yet, though this were no objection against the being of another world and a Providence, yet had the prosperity of bad men, and the calamities of the good, continued some hundred years, it had been a greater difficulty and a greater temptation than now it is. The prosperity of the wicked is a much less objection, when it is so easily answered, as the Psalmist does; "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be," *Psal.* xxxvii. 10. when they very same persons, who have been the spectators and witnesses of his prosperous villanies, live to see a quick and sudden end of him; "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found," ver. 35, 36. And this is enough also to support the spirits of good men: "For this cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 *Cor.* iv. 16, 17.

S E C T. V.

The time, and manner, and circumstances, of every particular man's death is not determined by an absolute and unconditional decree.

2. **T**HOUGH God, who knows all things, does know also the time, and manner, and circumstances, of every particular man's death; yet it does not appear that he has, by an absolute and unconditional decree, fixed and determined the particular time of every man's death. This is that famous question which Beverovicious, a learned physician, was so much concerned to have resolved, and consulted so many learned men about, as supposing it would be a great injury to his profession did men believe that the time of their death was so absolutely determined by God, that they could neither die sooner nor live longer than that fatal period, whether they took the advice and prescription of the physicians or not. But this was a vain fear; for there are some speculations which men never live by, how vehemently soever they contend for them: a sceptic, who pretends there is nothing certain, and will dispute with you as long as you please about it, yet will not venture his own arguments so far as to leap into fire or water, nor to stand before the mouth of a loaded cannon when you give fire to it. Thus men who talk most about fatal necessity and absolute decrees, yet they will eat and drink to preserve themselves in health, and take physic when they are sick; and as heartily

repent of their sins, and vow amendment and reformation, when they think themselves a-dying, as if they did not believe one word of such absolute decrees and fatal necessity as they talk of at other times.

I do not intend to engage in this dispute of necessity and fate, of prescience and absolute decrees, which will be disputes as long as the world lasts, unless men grow wiser than to trouble themselves with such questions as are above their reach, and which they can never have a clear notion and perception of; but all that I intend is to show you, according to the scripture-account of it, that the period of our lives is not so peremptorily determined by God, but that we may lengthen or shorten them, live longer or die sooner, according as we behave ourselves in this world.

Now, this is very plain from all those places of scripture, where God promises long life to good men, and threatens to shorten the lives of the wicked, *Psal.* xci. 16. "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Solomon tells us of Wisdom, "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour," *Prov.* iii. 16. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened," *Prov.* x. 27. Thus God has promised long life to those who honour their parents, in the fifth commandment; and the same promise is made in more general terms to those who observe the statutes and commandments of God, *Deut.* iv. 40. Upon the same condition God promised long life to king Solomon, *1 Kings*

iii. 14. "And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and commandments, as thy father David did walk; then will I lengthen thy days." The same is supposed in David's prayer to God, not to take him away in the midst of his days, *Psal.* cii. 24. and in *Psal.* lv. 23. he tells us, that "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." Now, one would reasonably conclude from hence, that God has not absolutely and unconditionally determined the fatal period of every man's life, because he has conditionally promised to prolong men's lives, or threatened to shorten them: for what place can there be for conditional promises where an absolute decree is past? how can any man be said not to live out half his days, if he lives as long as God has decreed he shall live? For if the period of every particular man's life be determined by God, none are his days but what God has decreed for him.

As for matter of fact, it is plain and evident, both that men shorten their own lives, and that God shortens them for them, and that in such a manner as will not admit of an absolute and unconditional decree. Thus some men destroy a healthful and vigorous constitution of body by intemperance and lust, and do as manifestly kill themselves as those who hang, or poison, or drown themselves; and both these sorts of men, I suppose, may be said to shorten their own lives; and so do those who rob or murder, or commit any other villany, which forfeits their lives to public justice; or quarrel, and fall in a duel, and the like.

And yet you will no more say, that God decreed and determined the death of these men than he did their sin.

Thus God himself very often shortens the lives of men by plague, and famine; and sword, and such other judgments as he executes upon a wicked world; and this must be confessed to be the effect of God's council and decrees, as a judge decrees and pronounces the death of a malefactor: but this is not an absolute and unconditional decree, but is occasioned by their sins and provocations, as all judgments are: they might have lived longer, and escaped these judgments, had they been virtuous and obedient to God; for if they should have lived no longer, whether they had sinned or not, their death, by what judgment soever they are cut off, is not so properly the execution of justice, as of a peremptory decree; their lives are not shortened, but their fatal period is come.

Indeed, unless we make the providence of God not the government of a wise and free agent, who acts *pro re nata*, and rewards and punishes as men deserve, as the scripture represents it; but an unavoidable execution of a long series of fatal and necessary events, from the beginning to the end of the world, as the Stoics thought; we must acknowledge, that in the government of free agents God has reserved to himself a free liberty of lengthening or shortening men's lives, as will best serve the ends of Providence. For if we will allow man to be a free agent; and that he is not under a necessity of sinning, and deserving to be

cut off at such a time, or in such a manner, the application of rewards and punishments to him must be free also, or else they may be ill applied; he may be punished when he deserves to be rewarded; the fatal period of life may fall out at such a time when he most of all deserves long life, and when the lengthening his life would be a public blessing to the world. Fatal and necessary events can never be fitted to the government of free agents, no more than you can make a clock which shall strike exactly for time any number, when such a man speaks, let him speak when, or name what number, he pleases. And yet there is nothing of greater moment in the government of the world than a free power and liberty of lengthening and shortening men's lives; for nothing more overawes mankind, and keeps them more in dependence on God; nothing gives a more signal demonstration of a divine power, or vengeance, or protection; nothing is a greater blessing to families or kingdoms, or a greater punishment to them, than the life or death of a parent, of a child, of a prince; and therefore it is as necessary to reserve this power to God as to assert a Providence. There are two or three places of scripture which are urged in favour of the contrary opinion; *Job* xiv. 5. "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." *Job* vii. 1. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?" which refer not to the particular period of every

man's life, but, as I observed before, to the general period of human life, which is fixed and determined, which is therefore called the days or the years of man, because God has appointed this the ordinary time of man's life; as when God threatens that the wicked shall not live out half their days, that is, half that time which is allotted for men to live on earth: for they have no other interest in these days but that they are the days of a man, and therefore might be their days too.

From what I have now discoursed, there are two things very plainly to be observed; 1. That men may contribute very much to the lengthening or shortening their own lives. 2. That the providence of God does peculiarly over-rule and determine this matter.

1. As for the first, we have no need to prove it; for we see men destroy their own lives every day, either by intemperance and lust, or more open violence; by forfeiting their lives to public justice, or by provoking the divine vengeance: and therefore whoever desires a long life, to fill up the number of his days which God has allotted us in this world, must keep himself from such destructive vices, must practise the most healthful virtues, must make God his friend, and engage his providence for his defence. Can any thing be more absurd than to hear men promise themselves long life, and reckon upon forty or fifty years to come, when they run into those excesses which will make a quick and speedy end of them; which will either inflame and corrupt their blood, and let a fever or a dropsy into their brains, or bring rotten-

ness in their bones, or engage them in some fatal quarrel, or ruin their estates, and send them to seek their fortune upon the road, which commonly brings them to the gallows? What a fatal cheat is this which men put upon themselves, especially when they sin in hope of time to repent, and commit such sins as will give no time to repent in!

The advice of the Psalmist is much better; "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile: depart from evil, and do good, seek peace, and pursue it." These are natural and moral causes of a long life: but that is not all; "for the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry; the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth;" that is, God will prolong the lives of good men, and cut off the wicked. Not that this is a general rule without exception, but it is the ordinary method of Providence. *Psal. xxxiv. 12, 13, &c.*

2. For though God has not determined how long every man shall live by an absolute and unconditional decree, yet if a sparrow does not fall to the ground without our Father, much less does man. No man can go out of this world, no more than he can come into it, but by a special Providence; no man can destroy himself but by God's leave: no disease can kill but when God pleases; no mortal accident can befall us but by God's appointment, who is therefore said

to deliver the man into the hands of his neighbour, who is killed by an evil accident, *Deut.* xix. 4, 5. These wasting judgments of plague and pestilence, famine and sword, are appointed by God, and have their particular commissions where to strike, as we may see, *Lev.* xxvi. 17, &c. *Jer.* vi. 6. *Isa.* lxv. 12. *Jer.* xv. 2. *Psal.* xci. and several other places. All the rage and fury of men cannot take away our lives but by God's particular permission, *Matt.* x. 28, 29, 30, 31.

And this lays as great an obligation on us as the love of life can, which is the dearest thing in this world, to serve and please God: this will make us secure from all fears and dangers; "My times," saith David, "are in thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me," *Psal.* xxxi. 15. This encourages us to pray to God for ourselves or our friends, whatever danger our lives are in, either from sickness or from men. There is no case wherein he cannot help us; when he sees fit, he can rectify the disorders of Nature, and correct an ill habit of body, and rebuke the most raging distemper, which mocks all the arts of physic, and powers of drugs; and many times does so by insensible methods. To conclude, this is a great satisfaction to good men, that our lives are in the hands of God; that though there be not such a fixed and immoveable period set to them, yet death cannot come but by God's appointment.

S E C T. VI.

The particular time when we are to die is unknown and uncertain to us.

3. **T**HE particular time when any of us are to die is unknown and uncertain to us; and that is what we call properly the uncertainty of our lives, that we know not when we shall die, whether this night, or to-morrow, or twenty years hence. There is no need to prove this, but only to mind you of it, and to acquaint you what wise use you are to make of it.

1. This shows how unreasonable it is to flatter ourselves with the hope of long life, I mean, of prolonging our lives near the utmost term and period of human life, which, though it be but short in itself, is yet the longest that any man can hope to live. No wise man will promise himself that which he can have no reason to expect, but what has often failed others: for let us seriously consider what reason any of us have to expect a long life; is it because we are young, and healthful and vigorous? And do we not daily see young men die? can youth, or beauty, or strength, secure us from the arrests of death? is it because we see some men live to a great age? But this was no security to those who died young, and left a great many men behind them who had lived twice or thrice their age; and therefore we may also see a great many old men, and die young ourselves. It

is possible we may live to an old age, because some do; but it is more likely we shall not, because there are more that die young. The truth is, the time of dying is so uncertain, the ways of dying so infinite, so unseen, so casual and fortuitous to us, that instead of promising ourselves long life, no wise man will promise himself a week, nor venture any thing of great moment and consequence upon it. The hope of long life is nothing else but self-flattery; the fondness men have for life, and that partiality they have for themselves, persuades them that they shall live as long as any man can live, and shall escape these diseases and fatal accidents with which our bills of mortality are filled every week: but then you should consider, that other men are as dear to themselves as you are, and flatter themselves as much with long life as you do: but their hopes very often deceive them, and so may yours.

But you will say, To what purpose is all this? why so much pains to put us out of conceit with the hopes of living long? for what hurt is it if we flatter ourselves a little more in this matter than we have reason for? If it should prove only a deceitful dream, yet it makes life cheerful and comfortable, and gives us a true relish of it; and why should we disturb ourselves, and make life uneasy, by the perpetual thoughts of dying?

Now, I confess, were there no hurt and danger in it, this were as ill-natured and spiteful a thing as could be done; and the least recompense I could make would be to ask you pardon for it, and leave you to enjoy the comforts of life secure-

ly for the future, to live on as long as you can, and let death come when it will without being looked for. But I apprehend a great deal of danger in such deceitful and flattering hopes, and that is the reason why I dissuade you from it: For,

1. The hope of long life is apt to make us fond of this world, which is as great a mischief to us as to expose us to all the temptations and flatteries of it. That we must die and leave this world is a good reason indeed why we ought not to be fond of it; why we should live like pilgrims or strangers here, as I observed before: but few men who hope to live threescore or fourscore years think much of this: tho' it be comparatively short in respect of eternity, yet it is a great while to live, and a great while to enjoy this world in; and that is thought a very valuable happiness which can be enjoyed so long. And then men let loose their desires and affections, endeavour to get as much of this world as they can, and to enjoy as much of it as they can; and not only to taste, but to take full and plentiful draughts of the intoxicating pleasures of it. And how dangerous this is I need not tell any man, who considers that all the wickedness of mankind is owing to too great a fondness and passion for this world.

And therefore, if we would live like pilgrims, and sit loose from all the enjoyments of this world, we must remember that our stay is uncertain here; that we have no lease of our lives, but may be turned out of our earthly tenements at pleasure. For what man would be fond of laying up great treasures on earth, who remembers that this night

his soul may be taken from him; and then whose shall all these things be? what man would place his happiness in such enjoyments, which, for ought he knows, he may be taken from to-morrow? These are indeed melancholy and mortifying considerations; and that is the true use of them; for it is necessary we should be mortified to this world, to cure the love of it, and conquer its temptations; "for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world."

2. As the hopes of long life give great advantages to the temptations of this world, so they weaken the hopes and fears of the other world; they strengthen our temptations, and weaken us; which must needs be of very fatal consequence to us in our spiritual welfare. All that we have to oppose against the flattering temptations of this world are the hopes and fears of the world to come; but the hope of long life sets the next world at too great a distance to conquer this: what is present works more powerfully upon our minds than what is absent; and the farther any thing is off the less powerful it is.

To make you sensible of this, I shall only desire you to remember what thoughts you have had of another world when the present fears of dying have given you a nearer view of it. Good-Lord! what agonies have I seen dying sinners in! how penitent, how devout, how resolved upon a new course of life! which too often vanish like a dream,

when the fear of death is over. What is the reason of this difference? heaven and hell is the very same when we are in health as when we are sick; and I will suppose that you do as firmly believe a heaven and a hell in health as in sickness. The only thing then that makes the thoughts of the other world so strong, and powerful, and affecting, when we are sick, is, that we see the other world near us, that we are just a-stepping into it, and this makes it our present concernment; but in health we see the other world a great way off, and therefore do not think it of such near and present concernment: and what we do not think ourselves at present concerned in, or not much concerned in, how great and valuable soever it be in itself, will either not affect us at all, or very little. Thus, while bad men place the other world at a great distance from them, and out of sight, they have no restraint at all upon their lusts and passions; and good men themselves, at the greater distance they see the other world, are so much the less affected by it, which damps their zeal and their devotion, and makes them less active and vigorous in doing good.

And there is so much the more danger in this, because men look upon the other world as farthest off, and so are least concerned about it, when the thoughts of the other world are most useful and most necessary to them. In the heat and vigour of youth men are most exposed to the temptations of flesh and sense, and have most need to think of another world, and a future judgment: but those who promise themselves a long life, see death and

another world so far off, while they are young, that it moves them as little as if there were no other world.

And though one would think that, as our lives waste, and as the other world grows near, so we should recover a more lively sense of it; yet we find it quite otherwise. When men have been used to think the next world a great way off, they will never think it near till it comes; and when they have been used to think of the other world without any passion or concernment for it, it is almost an impossible thing to give any quickness and passion to such thoughts: for when any thoughts, and the passions that properly belong to such thoughts, have been a great while separated, it is a hard thing to unite them again; to begin to think of that with passion and concern which we have been used for thirty or forty years to think of without any concernment.

3. Another dangerous effect of flattering ourselves with long life is, that it encourages men to sin with the vain hopes and resolutions of repenting before they die. When men are convinced that if they live and die in sin they must be miserable for ever; as I believe most professed Christians are, as I am sure all must be who believe the gospel of our Saviour; there is no other possible way to ward off this blow, and to sin securely under such convictions, but by resolving to repent, and to make their peace with God, before they die: they flatter themselves they have a great while yet to live, judgment is a great way off, and therefore they may indulge themselves a while,

and enjoy the sweets of sin, and gratify their youthful inclinations, and learn the vanity of the world by experience, as their forefathers have done before them; and then they will grow as wise and grave, and declaim against the follies and vanities of youth, and be as penitent, and as devout and religious, as any of them all.

Whoever considers the uncertainty of human life, if he should hear men talk at this rate, would either conclude that they were mad, or merrily disposed; but could never guess that they were in their wits, and in good earnest too. But if we allow men to be in their wits, who can promise themselves long life, when they see every day how uncertain life is; (and if we will not allow such men to be in their wits, above two-thirds of the world are mad); this gives a plain account how men may resolve to sin while they are young, and to repent when they are old: for it is only the flattering hopes of a long life that can encourage men in a course of sin. Men, indeed, who do not promise themselves long life may commit a particular sin, and resolve to repent of it as soon as they have done, which are a more modest sort of sinners; of which more presently; but I speak now of those (and too many such there are) who resolve to take their fill of this world while youth and strength and health last, and to grow sober and religious when they grow old; the consequence of which is, that they resolve to be damned, unless they live till they are old, or till they grow weary of their sins, and learn more wisdom by age and experience.

Now, I shall not insist at present upon the hazard such men run of not living till the time comes which they allotted for their repentance, which belongs to another argument; but only what a dangerous thing it is to be tempted to a custom and habit of sinning by the hope of long life, and of time enough to repent in; for there is not a greater cheat in the world that men put upon themselves than to indulge themselves in all manner of wickedness, to contract strong and powerful habits of vice, with a resolution to repent of their sins, and to forsake them, before they die.

The experience of the world sufficiently proves how vain this is; for though some such men may live till they are old, how seldom is it seen that they repent of their youthful debaucheries when they grow old! they still retain their love and affection for those sins which they can commit no longer; and repent of nothing but that they are grown old, and cannot be so wicked as they were when they were young.

And is there any reason in the world to expect it should be otherwise? Do we not know what the power of habit and custom is? how the love of sin increases with the repeated commission of it? and is the spending our youthful strength and vigour in sin likely to dispose and prepare us to be sincere penitents when we grow old? Do we not see that a custom of sinning in some men destroys a modesty of human nature; in others, all sense of God and of religion, or of the natural differences of good and evil? Some men sin on

till they despise repentance, others till they think repentance is too late; so that though men were sure that they should live long enough to grow wiser, and to repent and reform the sins and extravagancies of youth; yet no man who enters upon a wicked course of life has any reason to expect that he shall ever repent: and therefore it is extremely dangerous to flatter ourselves into a habit and custom of sinning, with the hopes and expectations that we shall live to repent of our sins; and if this be dangerous, it must be very dangerous to flatter ourselves with the hopes of long life, which is the great temptation to men to sin on, and to delay their repentance till old age.

2. Since the time of our death is so unknown and uncertain to us, we ought always to live in expectation of it; to be so far from promising ourselves long life, that we should not promise ourselves a day: and the reason for it is plain and necessary, because we are not sure of a day.

This, you will say, is hard indeed, to live always in expectation of dying, which is no better than dying every day, or enduring the repeated fears and terrors of death every day, which is the most uncomfortable part of dying: at this rate we never live, but instead of dying once, as God has appointed, we are always a-dying; nay, this indeed is a fine saying, but signifies nothing, for no man does it nor can do it: though we may die every day, we see that men live on forty, fifty, threescore years; and therefore, though we know that our lives are uncertain, yet no man can think every day that he shall die to-day.

This is very true, and therefore to live always in expectation of dying does not signify a belief that we shall die to-day, but only that we may; which answers the objections against the uncomfortableness of it: for such an expectation as this has nothing of dread and terror in it, but only prudence and caution. Men may live very comfortably, and enjoy all the innocent pleasures of life, with these thoughts about them: to expect death every day is like expecting thieves every night, which does not disturb our rest, but only makes us lock and bar our doors, and provide for our own defence. Thus to expect death is not to live under the perpetual fears of dying, but to live as a wise man would do, who knows not that he must, but that he may, die to-day.

That is, to be always prepared for death; not to defer our repentance and return to God for one moment; not to commit any wilful sin, lest death should surprise us in it; not to be slothful and negligent, but to be always employed in our Master's business, according to our Saviour's counsel, *Luke xii. 35, &c.* "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye there-

“ fore ready also ; for the Son of man cometh at
“ an hour when ye think not.” This our Savi-
our also warns us of in the parable of the wise
and foolish virgins, *Matt. xxv.* While the bride-
groom tarried they all slept ; but the wise virgins
presently arose, and trimmed their lamps, and
went in with him to the marriage, and the door
was shut : the foolish virgins had no oil, and their
lamps were gone out ; and while they went to
buy oil, they were shut out, and could afterwards
procure no admission. “ Watch, therefore, for
“ ye know neither the day nor the hour when the
“ Son of man cometh.”

This is the danger of a sudden death, and the
reason why our church prays against it ; for were
we always in a preparation to die, with our
lamps trimmed and burning, like virgins who ex-
pect the bridegroom, to die then without notice,
without fear and apprehension, without the me-
lancholy solemnities of dying, were a true *εὐθανασία*,
the most desirable way of dying. But the danger
of a sudden death is, that men are surprised in
their sins, and hurried away to judgment before
their accounts are ready ; that they are snatched
out of this world before they made any provi-
sion for the next. And the only way to prevent
this is to be always upon our watch, always in
expectation of death, and always prepared for it.

Some men think themselves very safe, if, after
an age of sin and vanity, they have but so much
notice of death as to ask God’s pardon upon a
sickbed, to confess and bewail the wickedness of
their past lives, to die in horrors and agonies of

mind, which they call repentance, but indeed are nothing else but the sad presages of an awakened conscience, distracted with its own guilt, and the terrible expectations of vengeance. But though this be a very comfortless way of dying, and, I fear, generally very hopeless too; yet no man can promise himself so much as this, who does not live in a constant expectation of death. We may be cut off by a sudden stroke, or seized with distraction or stupidity, so that if only asking God pardon before we die would save our soul, we could not do it. And this is the case of so many sinners, that it should be a warning to all: men who know not when, or how, or in what manner, they must die, ought to be ready prepared against all accidents and surprising events.

3. Since the time of our death is so very uncertain, it concerns us to improve our present time; because no time is ours but what is present. I observed before, that the shortness of our lives, though we were to live to the utmost extent of them, threescore and ten, or fourscore years, was a sufficient reason to lose none of our time, but to improve it to the best and wisest purposes: and the surest way to lose none of our time is to improve the present time; and there is a plain necessary reason why we should do that, because our lives are uncertain, and therefore no time is ours but what is present. The time past was ours; but that is gone, and we can never recall it, nor live it over again; if we have spent it well, we shall find it ours still in our account, but it is no longer our time to live and act in: the time to

time may be ours, and may not; because we know not whether we shall live to it, and therefore we cannot reckon upon it: the time present is ours, and that is the only time that is ours; and therefore if we will improve our time, we must improve our present time, we must live to-day, and not put off living till to-morrow.

All mankind are sensible of the necessity and prudence of this in all other matters, excepting the concernment of their souls. An Epicurean sensualist is for the present gratification of his lusts; *Vivi hodie*, is his motto; "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Men who are intent upon increasing riches, and advancing their fortune and honours, are for taking the present time and opportunity to do it. Indeed, setting aside the consideration of the uncertainty of our lives, there are some things which a wise man will not delay, or put off to another time, when he has opportunity to do it at present.

What is necessary to be done, he will do as soon as he can, the very first moment that it becomes necessary, if opportunity serves.

What is necessary every day, he will not put off from one day to another, but will do it every day; as eating, and drinking, and sleeping are.

What he resolves to do, and may as well do at present, and is as fit to be done at present as at any other time, he will do at present.

What may suffer by delays, he will do the first time he can do it.

What is proper for some peculiar times and seasons, he will do when those times and seasons

come, as the husbandman observes the seasons for sowing and reaping; the tradesman his markets and fairs.

What is of present use and convenience to him, what he takes great pleasure in, or what he mightily longs for and desires, he will by no means delay, but is for doing it at present.

Now, all these are very weighty reasons why we should take care of our souls, repent of our sins, live in the practice of all Christian graces and virtues, and do all the good we can at present; but much more, when we consider that our lives are so uncertain, that we may have no other time to do any thing of this in but what is present.

For, (1.) Is any thing of more absolute necessity than the salvation of our souls? This is that one thing needful; the salvation of our souls is needful as a necessary end, and the practice of true religion needful as subservient to that end. If to escape eternal misery, and to obtain eternal happiness, be not necessary, I know not what can make any thing necessary. And if this cannot be done without the knowledge and practice of true religion, that is as necessary as the salvation of our souls is. And can any present time, how early soever it be, be too soon to do that which is necessary to be done; especially when we are not sure of any other time to do it in? No time is too soon to do that which is absolutely necessary; and no wise man will neglect doing that at present, which, unless it be done, he must be miserable for ever: and yet it may never be done, if it be not done at present.

(2.) Is not religion, and the care of our souls, the work of every day, as much as eating and drinking to preserve our bodily health and strength is? must we not pray to God every day, and make his laws the rule of our actions every day, and repent of our sins, and do what good we can every day? And what is the work of every day we ought to do every day, though we were secure of living till to-morrow, much more when we know that we may die before another day come.

(3.) Do ye not all resolve to repent of your sins, and reform your lives, before ye die? and is it not as necessary to repent of your sins to-day as ever it will be? is not to-day as proper a time to repent in as ever you are likely to have? are ye sure of having another day to repent in if ye neglect this? This may convince any considering man, that no resolutions of repenting hereafter can be sincere; because such men resolve indeed to repent, but do not resolve to do it at such a time when they can do it, that is, the present time, which alone they are sure of; but put it off till another time, which may never be theirs.

I grant, men may sincerely resolve to do that a month hereafter, or half a-year or a year hence, which they do not find so fitting and convenient to do at present: but then this is not an absolute resolution to do such a thing, but a conditional resolution that they will do it, if they live till such a time when it will be convenient to be done.

Consider then which of these you mean when you resolve to repent: is it only a conditional resolution, that you will repent if you live till such

a time? I grant there is some sense in this resolution; but I wish you would consider what danger there is in it too: for are you contented to be eternally miserable if you do not live till your time of repentance comes? No; this you tremble at the thoughts of, and resolve to repent, because you resolve not to be miserable for ever: that is, you absolutely resolve to repent, you are convinced this is absolutely necessary; it is a work that must be done, and you are resolved to do it. Consider then, how vain and contradictory this resolution is, to resolve to repent hereafter; which is an absolute resolution, with a condition annexed to it, and a very uncertain one too; a resolution certainly to repent, but not in a certain but uncertain time. And yet those who repent must repent in some time; and repentance can never be certain, when the time to repent in is uncertain. Indeed no resolution is good which is not for the present time, when there are no exceptions against doing it at present, especially when there is such manifest danger in deferring it. To resolve to repent hereafter, when the present time is the only certain time to repent in, only signifies that men are convinced of the necessity of repentance, but love their sins so well that they cannot part with them yet; and therefore, that they may sin on securely, without the perpetual fears and terrors of another world, they resolve to repent hereafter. Now, though there were no such manifest danger in a delay, from the uncertainty of our lives, yet let any man judge whether such resolutions as these are ever like to take effect; a

resolution which is owing to a great love to sin, and is intended only to silence men's guilty fears, and give a present security in sinning. For this reason, they resolve not to repent now, but to repent hereafter; and if they keep this resolution, they will never repent; for hereafter will never come, which does not signify any set and determined time, but any time which is not present. The reason why they resolve not to repent to-day will extend to every day when it comes; that is, that they love their sins, and are unwilling to part with them: and the reason why they resolve to repent hereafter will serve for all hereafters, but will never serve for any time present; *viz.* because they will not repent yet, and yet will flatter themselves into security with vain hopes of repentance. Flatter not yourselves then with vain hope; he who resolves to repent, but does not resolve to repent presently, though he knows he is sure of no other time but the present to repent in, does not sincerely resolve to repent, but only resolves to delay his repentance.

The like may be said concerning the danger of delays, concerning missing the proper times and seasons of action, and neglecting that which is of present use to us, and which we ought above all things to desire, *viz.* to secure the happiness of our immortal souls; but I shall only add this one thing to make you sensible what it is to let slip the present time, without improving it to any wise purposes; that he who loses his present time loses all the time he has, all the time that he can call his own: which is the sum of all other arguments,

that the present time is the only time he has to live in, to repent in, to serve God, and to do good to men in, to improve his knowledge, and to exercise his graces, and to prepare himself for a blessed immortality ; which are the most necessary, the most useful, the most desirable, things in the world, and that which gives the value to time itself, which is valuable only for the sake of what may be done, and what may be enjoyed in it.

But you will say, At this rate we must spend our whole lives in the duties of religion, in thinking on God and another world, in acts of repentance and mortification, in prayer and fasting, and such like exercises of devotion : here will be no time left for the ordinary affairs of life, scarce to eat, or drink, or sleep in ; but that they will have some of our time whether we will or no : but here is no allowance made for recreations and diversions, for the conversation of friends, and innocent mirth and pastime, to refresh our wearied bodies and minds ; for if we must be careful to improve the present time to the best purposes, our present time is our whole time, for we have no time but what is present ; and as one minute succeeds another, still we must improve it to the best purposes ; that is, we can do but one thing all our lives ; and the best way then would be to turn hermits, and sequester ourselves from the world and human conversation.

The answers to this objection will teach us what it is to improve our present time, and how it must be done.

Now, *1st*, I allow the objection so far, that if a man have mispent great part of his life, have contracted great guilt, and powerful habits of vice; the chief, and, almost, the only thing such a man can do, is to bewail his sins before God, and, with earnest and repeated importunities, to beg his pardon; to live in a state of penance and mortification; to deny himself the pleasures and comforts of life, till he has in some measure subdued his love of sin, and regained the command and government of his passions, and has recovered the peace of his mind, and some good hopes that God has forgiven him, and received him into favour, for the sake of Christ. Thus he ought to do; and when he is made thoroughly sensible of his sins, and the danger he is in, he can do no otherwise. While he is terrified with the fears of hell, he has little stomach to the necessary affairs and business of life, much less to the mirth and pleasures of it. But this is such an interruption to the ordinary and regular course of life as a fit of sickness is, which confines us to our bed, or to our chamber, and makes us incapable of minding any thing but the recovery of our health: and when this is the case, then, indeed, the care of our souls is the only necessary business, and only employment of our time.

2^{dly}, But when this is not the case, the wise improvement of our present time does not confine us always to be upon our knees, or doing something which has a direct and immediate aspect upon God and another world; for the state of this world will not admit of that: but he em-

employs his time well, who divides it among all the affairs and offices of life, between this world and the next, and employs the several portions of his time in things fit and proper for such a season; who begins and ends the day with adoring his Maker and Redeemer, blessing him for all his mercies both temporal and spiritual, begging the pardon of all his sins, the protection of his Providence, the assistance of his grace: and then minds his secular affairs with justice and righteousness, eats and drinks with sobriety and temperance, does all good offices for men as occasion serves, and, if he have any spare time, improves it for the increase of his knowledge, by reading and meditating on the scriptures, or other useful books; or refreshes himself with the innocent and cheerful conversation of his friends, or such other diversions as are not so much a loss and expense of time, as a necessary relaxation of the mind, to recruit our spirits, and to make us more fit either for business or devotion. But then, on days set apart for the more public and solemn acts of worship, religion is his chief employment: for that is the proper work of the day, to worship God, and to examine the state of his own soul; to learn his duty more perfectly, and to affect his mind with such a powerful sense of God and another world, as may arm him against all temptations when he returns to the world again. This is to improve our present time well, to observe the proper times and seasons of action, and to do what is fit and proper for such seasons; never to do any thing which is evil; and as for

the several kinds of good actions, to do what particular times and seasons require. Thus we may give a good account of our whole time, even of our most loose vacant hours; which it becomes us to do, though we were certain to live many years, but does more nearly concern us when our time is so uncertain.

4. Since our lives are so very uncertain, this ought to cure an anxious care and solicitude for times to come. We may live many years, tho' our lives are uncertain, and therefore a provident care becomes us; but we may die also very quickly, and why then should we disturb ourselves with to-morrow's cares, much less with some remoter possibilities? Hast thou at any time an ill prospect before thee of private or public calamities? do the storms gather? are the clouds black and lowering, and charged with thunder, and ready to break over thy head? Shelter thyself as well as thou canst, make all prudent provision for a storm, because thou mayest live to see it: but be not too much dismayed and terrified with a storm at a distance; for thy head may be laid low enough, and out of its reach, before it breaks; and then all this trouble and perplexity is in vain. Many such examples have I seen, of men disturbed with ill presages of what was coming; which, besides that those things did not happen which they expected, or were not so black and dismal as their affrighted fancy painted them; if they had come, they were very safe first, and got out of their way.

I do not intend by this to comfort men against foreseen evils, that they may die before they come,

which is a small comfort to most men, when, it may be, death is the most formidable thing in the evils they fear: but since our lives are uncertain, and we may die, and never see the evils we fear, it is unreasonable to be as much distracted with them as if they were present and certain. The uncertainty of future events is one reason why we ought not to be anxious and solicitous about them, and the uncertainty of our lives is another: and what is very uncertain ought not to be the object of any great concern or passion.

5. For the same reason we ought not to be greatly afraid of men, nor to put our trust and confidence in them, because their lives are very uncertain; they may not be able to hurt us, when we are most apprehensive of danger from them; nor to help us, when we need them most. This is the Psalmist's argument, *Psal.* cxlvi. 3, 4. "Put
" not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man,
" in whom there is no help; his breath goeth
" forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very
" day his thoughts perish." *Isa.* ii. 22. "Cease
" ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,
" for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Men, especially great and powerful men, may do us a great deal of hurt, and may do us a great deal of good; and therefore common prudence will teach us, by all wise and honest arts, to gain their favour, and to avoid all unreasonable and needless provocations: but yet, at best, they are such brittle creatures, that they can be the objects only of a subordinate fear or hope. When the fear of man comes in competition with the fear of God, it is

wife counsel which the prophet Isaiah gives;
 “ Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom
 “ this people shall say, A confederacy; neither
 “ fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the
 “ Lord God of hosts himself, and let him be your
 “ fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall
 “ be for a sanctuary,” *Isa. viii. 12, 13, 14.* There
 is a vast difference between the power of God and
 men; which is our Saviour’s reason why we should
 fear God more than men: “ Be not afraid of
 “ them who can kill the body, and after that
 “ they have no more that they can do: but I will
 “ forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear him,
 “ which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast
 “ into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him,” *Luke*
xii. 4, 5. But whatever power men may have to
 hurt while they live, they can do us no hurt when
 they are dead; and their lives are so very uncer-
 tain, that they may be quickly eased of those fears.
 The same may be said with respect to hope and
 confidence in men; though their word and pro-
 mise were always sacred, yet their lives are uncer-
 tain; “ their breath goeth forth, they return to
 “ their earth; in that very day their thoughts
 “ perish;” all the good and all the evil they in-
 tended to do: but “ happy is he that hath the
 “ God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the
 “ Lord his God, which made heaven and earth,
 “ the sea, and all that therein is, who keepeth
 “ truth for ever,” *Psal. cxlvi. 5, 6.*

6. For a conclusion of this argument, I shall
 briefly vindicate the wisdom and goodness of God
 in concealing from us the time of our death. This

we are very apt to complain of, that our lives are so very uncertain, that we know not to-day but that we may die to-morrow: and we would be mighty glad to meet with any one who could certainly inform us in this matter, how long we are to live; but if we think a little better of it, we shall be of another mind.

For, *1st*, Though I presume many of you would be glad to know that you shall certainly live twenty, or thirty, or forty years longer; yet would it be any comfort to know that you must die to-morrow, or some few months, or a year or two hence? which may be your case, for ought you know: and this, I believe, you are not very desirous to know; for how would this chill your blood and spirits? how would it overcast all the pleasures and comforts of life? You would spend your days like men under the sentence of death, while the execution is suspended.

Did all men who must die young certainly know it, it would destroy the industry and improvements of half mankind, which would half destroy the world, or be an unsupportable mischief to human societies; for what man, who knows that he must die at twenty, or five-and-twenty, a little sooner or later, would trouble himself with ingenious or gainful arts, or concern himself any more with this world than just to live so long in it? And yet how necessary is the service of such men in the world? what great things do they many times do? and what great improvements do they make? how pleasant and diverting is their conversation, while it is inno-

cent? how do they enjoy themselves, and give life and spirit to the graver age? how thin would our schools, our shops, our universities, and all places of education be, did they know how little time many of them were to live in the world? For would such men concern themselves to learn the arts of living who must die as soon as they have learned them? would any father be at a great expense in educating his child, only that he might die with a little Latin and Greek, logic and philosophy? No; half the world must be divided into cloisters and nunneries, and nurseries for the grave.

Well, you will say, suppose that; and is not this an advantage above all the inconveniencies you can think of, to secure the salvation of so many thousands who are now eternally ruined by youthful lusts and vanities, but would spend their days in piety and devotion, and make the next world their only care, if they knew how little while they were to live here?

Right, I grant this might be a good way to correct the heat and extravagancies of youth; and so it would be to show them heaven and hell: but God does not think fit to do either, because it offers too much force and violence to men's minds; it is no trial of their virtue, of their reverence for God, of their conquests and victory over this world by the power of faith; but makes religion a matter of necessity, not of choice. Now, God will force and drive no man to heaven; the gospel dispensation is the trial and discipline of ingenious spirits; and if the certain hopes and fears of another world, and the uncertainty of our living here,

will not conquer these flattering temptations, and make men seriously religious, as those who must certainly die, and go into another world, and they know not how soon, God will not try whether the certain knowledge of the time of their death will make them religious. That they may die young, and that thousands did so, is reason enough to engage young men to expect death, and prepare for it; if they will venture, they must take their chance, and not say they had no warning of dying, if they eternally miscarry by their wilful delays.

And, besides this, God expects our youthful service and obedience, though we were to live on till old age. That we may die young is not the proper, much less the only, reason why we should remember our Creator in the days of our youth; but because God has a right to our youthful strength and vigour: and if this will not oblige us to an early piety, we must not expect that God will set death in our view to fright and terrify us; as if the only design God had in requiring our obedience was not that we might live like reasonable creatures to the glory of their Maker and Redeemer, but that we might repent of our sins time enough to escape hell. God is so merciful as to accept of returning prodigals, but does not think fit to encourage us in sin, by giving us notice when we shall die, and when it is time to think of repentance.

2dly, Though I doubt not but that it would be a great pleasure to you to know that you should live till old age, yet consider a little with yourselves, and then tell me, whether you yourselves

can judge it wise and fitting for God to let you know this?

I observed to you before, what danger there is in flattering ourselves with the hopes of long life; that it is apt to make us too fond of this world, when we expect to live so long in it; that it weakens the hopes and fears of the next world, by removing it at too great a distance from us; that it encourages men to live in sin, because they have time enough before them to indulge their lusts, and to repent of their sins, and make their peace with God, before they die. And if the uncertain hopes of this undoes so many men, what would the certain knowledge of it do? Those who are too wise and considerate to be imposed upon by such uncertain hopes, might be conquered by the certain knowledge of a long life.

This would take off all restraints from men, and give free scope to their vicious inclinations, when they knew that, how wicked soever they were, they should not die before their time was come, and could never be surprised by death, since they certainly knew when it would come; which destroys one great motive to obedience, that sin shall shorten men's lives, and that virtue and piety shall prolong them; that "the wicked shall not live half their days;" that "the fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened," *Prov. x. 27*. Such promises and threatenings as these must be struck out of the Bible, should God let men know the time of their death.

Nay, this would frustrate the methods and de-

signs of Providence for the reclaiming sinners. Sometimes public calamities, plague, and famine, and sword, alarm a wicked world, and summon men to repentance; sometimes a dangerous fit of sickness awakens men into a sense of their sins, and works in them a true and lasting repentance; but all this would be ineffectual, did men know the time of their death, and that such public judgments, or threatening sickness, should not kill them.

The uncertainty of our lives is a great motive to constant watchfulness, to an early and persevering piety; but to know when we shall die could serve no good end, but would increase the wickedness of mankind, which is too great already; which is a sufficient vindication of the wisdom of God in leaving the time of death unknown and uncertain to us.

S E C T VII.

That we must die but once; or, that death translates us to an unchangeable state: with the improvement of it.

THE last thing to be considered is, That we must die but once; *It is appointed for men once to die.* There are some exceptions from this rule, as there are from dying; that as Enoch and Elias did not die, so some have been raised again from the dead, to live in this world; and such men died twice. But this is a certain rule in general, that as all men must die once, so they must die but

once; which needs no other proof but the daily experience and observation of mankind.

But that which I intended by it is this, that once dying determines our state and condition for ever. When we put off these mortal bodies, we must not return into them again, to act over a new part in this world, and to correct the errors and miscarriages of our former lives; death translates us to an immutable and unchangeable state; so that, in this sense, what the wise man tells us is true; "If the tree fall towards the south, or
"towards the north, in the place where the tree
"falleth, there it shall be," *Ecclus. xi. 3.* This is a consideration of very great moment, and deserves to be more particularly explained, which I shall do in these following propositions.

1. That this life is the only state of trial and probation for eternity: and therefore, 2. Death, whenever it comes, as it puts a final period to this life, that we die once for all, and must never live again, as we do now in this world, so it puts a final end to our work too; that our day of grace, and time of working for another world, ends with this life. And, 3. As a necessary consequence of both these, once dying puts us into an immutable and unchangeable state.

1. That this life is only our state of trial and probation for eternity: whatever is to be done by us to obtain the favour of God, and a blessed immortality, must be done in this life.

I observed before, that this life is wholly in order to the next; that the great, the only necessary business we have to do in this world is to fit

and prepare ourselves to live for ever in God's presence; "to finish the work God has given us to do," that we may receive the reward of good and faithful servants, to enter into our Master's rest: I now add, that the only time we have to do this in is while we live in this world. This is evident from what St Paul tells us, that, "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad," *2 Cor. v. 10*. Now, if we must be judged, and receive our final sentence, according to what we have done in the body, then our only time of trial and working is while we live in these bodies; for the judgment refers only to what is done in the body.

The gospel of Christ is the rule whereby we must be judged, even that gospel which St Paul preached, *Rom. ii. 16*. And all the laws and precepts of the gospel concern the government of our conversation in this world; and; therefore, if we be judged by the gospel, we must be judged only for what we have done in this world.

This life, throughout the scripture, is represented as the time of working, as a race, a warfare, a labouring in the vineyard; the other world as a place of recompense, of rewards or punishments. And if there be such a relation between this world and the next as between fighting and conquering and receiving the crown, as between running a race and obtaining a prize, as between the work and the reward; then we must fight and conquer, run our race and finish our work in this world, if we expect the reward of the next.

Many of those graces and virtues which our Saviour has promised to reward with eternal life can be exercised only in this world; faith and hope are peculiar only to this life, while the other world is absent and unseen: and these are the great principles and graces of the Christian life, to believe what we do not see, and to live and act upon the hopes of future rewards. The government of our bodily appetites and passions by the rules of temperance, sobriety, and chastity, necessarily supposes that we have bodies and bodily appetites and passions to govern; and therefore these virtues can be exercised only while we live in these bodies, which solicit and tempt us to sensual excesses. To live above this world, to despise the tempting glories of it, is a virtue only while we live in it, and are tempted by it: to have our conversation in heaven, which is the most divine temper of mind, is a gospel-grace only while we live in this world, at a great distance from heaven: to be contented in all conditions, to trust God in the greatest dangers, to suffer patiently for righteousness' sake, &c. I need not tell you, are virtues proper only for this world; for there can be no exercise for them in heaven, unless we can think it a virtue to be patient and contented with the happiness and glory of that blessed place.

Thus, most of the sins which the gospel forbids under the penalty of eternal damnation can be committed by us only in this world, and in these bodies; such as fornication, adultery, uncleanness, rioting, drunkenness, injustice, murder, theft, oppression of the poor and fatherless, earthly pride

and ambition, covetousness, a fond idolatry of this world, disobedience to parents and governors, &c. Now, if these be the things for which men shall be saved or damned, it is certain that men must be saved or damned only for what they do in this life.

Bad men, who are fond of this world, and of bodily pleasures, which make them impatient of the severe restraints of religion, complain very much of this, that their eternal happiness or misery depends upon such a short and uncertain life; that they must spend this life under the awe and terror of the next; that some few momentary pleasures must be punished with endless misery; and that if they outslip their time of repentance, if they venture to sin on too long, or die a little too soon, there is no remedy for them for ever.

But let bad men look to this, and consider the folly of their choice. I am sure, how hard soever it may be thought to be eternally damned for the short pleasures of sin, no man can reasonably think it a hard condition of eternal salvation to spend a short life in the service of God. And if we will allow, that God may justly require our services and obedience for so great a reward as heaven is, where can we do him this service but on earth? If a corrupt nature must be cleansed and purified, if an earthly nature must be spiritualized and refined, before it can be fit to live in heaven, where can this be done but on earth, whilst we live in these bodies of flesh, and are encompassed with sensible objects? This is the time for a divine soul, which aspires after immortality,

to raise itself above the body, to conquer this present world by the belief and hope of unseen things; to awaken and exercise its spiritual powers and faculties, and to adorn itself with those virtues and graces which come down from heaven, and, by the mercies of God, and the merits of our Saviour, will carry us up thither. There is no middle state between living in this body and out of it; and, therefore, whatever habits and dispositions of mind are necessary to make a spirit happy, when it goes out of this body, must be formed and exercised while it is in it: earth and heaven are two extremes, and opposite states of life; and, therefore, it is impossible immediately to pass from one to the other. A soul which is wholly sensualized by living in the body, if it be turned out of the body without any change, cannot ascend into heaven, which is a state of perfect purity; for in all reason the place and state of life must be fitted to the nature of things: and therefore, a life of holiness, while we live in these bodies, is a kind of middle state between earth and heaven; such a man belongs to both worlds; he is united to this world by his body, which is made of earth, and feels the impression of sensible objects, but his heart and affections are in heaven; by faith he contemplates those invisible glories, and feels and relishes the pleasures of a heavenly life. And he who has his conversation in heaven while he lives in this body, is ready prepared and fitted to ascend thither when he goes out of it; he passes from earth to heaven through the middle region (if I may so speak) of a holy and divine life.

Besides this, it was necessary to the happiness and good government of this present world, that future rewards or punishments should have relation to the good or evil which we do in this life. This, in many cases, lays restraints upon the lusts and passions of men, when the rods and axes of princes cannot reach them; it overawes them with invisible terrors, and makes a guilty conscience its own judge and tormentor; it sours all the pleasures of sin, stuffs the adulterer's pillow with thorns, and mingles gall and wormwood with the drunkard's cups: it governs those who are under no other government, whose boundless and uncontrollable power gives them opportunity of doing what mischief they please, and gives them impunity in doing it. But the most lawless tyrants, who fear no other power, yet feel the invisible restraints of conscience, and those secret and severe rebukes which make them tremble. Nay, many times, the fear of the other world governs those whom no present evil or punishment can govern: men who would venture whatever they could suffer in this life by their sins are yet afraid of hell, and dare not venture that: those who would venture being sick after a debauch, who would venture to sacrifice their bodies, their estates, their reputation, in the service of their lusts; who are contented to take their fortune at the gallows, or at the whipping-post, yet dare not venture lakes of fire and brimstone, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out.

Thus, on the other hand, how much is it for the present happiness of the world that men should live in the practice of those Christian graces and virtues which no human laws command, and the neglect of which no human laws can punish? As, to instance only in the love of enemies, and forgiveness of injuries, and such an universal charity as does all the good it can to all men; I need not prove that the exercise of these virtues is for the good of the world, or that no human laws require the exercise of them in such noble measures and degrees as the gospel does.

The laws of the land allow scope enough to satisfy the most revengeable man, who will use all the extremities and the vexatious arts of prosecution, unless nothing will satisfy his revenge but blood and a speedy execution: for the laws ought to punish those injuries which a good Christian ought to forgive; and then some men may be undone by legal revenge, and others damned for taking it. If no man should do any good offices for others but what the law commands, there would be very little good done in the world; for laws are principally intended for the preservation of justice; but the acts of a generous and bountiful charity are free; and men may be as charitable as the law requires, without any degree of that divine charity which will carry them to heaven. Nothing but the hopes and fears of the next world can enforce these duties on us. And this justifies the wisdom and goodness of God in making the present exercise of these virtues necessary to our future rewards. I shall only add, that

whatever complaints bad men may make, that their future happiness or misery depends upon the government and conduct of their lives in this world, I am sure all mankind would have had great reason to complain if it had been otherwise; for how miserable must it have made us to have certainly known that we must be eternally happy or eternally miserable in the next world, and not to have as certainly known how to escape the miseries and obtain the happiness of it? and how could that be possibly known, if the trial of it had been reserved for an unknown state? What a terrible thing had it been to die, could no man have been sure what would have become of him in the next world? as no man could have been, upon this supposal: for how can any man know what his reward shall be, when he is so far from having done his work, that he knows not what he is to do till he comes into the next world?

But now, since we shall be rewarded according to what we have done in this body, every man certainly knows what will make him happy or miserable in the next world; and it is his own fault if he do not live so as to secure immortal life. And what a blessed state is this, to have so joyful a prospect beyond the grave, and put off these bodies with the certain hopes of a glorious resurrection! This, I think, is sufficient to vindicate the wisdom and goodness of God in making this present life a state of trial and probation for the happiness of the next. But to proceed:

2. If this life be only our state of trial and probation for eternity, then death, as it puts a final

period to this life, so it puts a final end to our work too; our day of grace, and time of working for another world, ends with this life.

We shall apprehend the necessity of this, if we remember that death, which is the punishment of sin, is not merely the death of the body, but that state of misery to which death translates sinners: and therefore, if we die while we are in a state of sin, under the curse and under the power of death; there is no redemption for us; because the justice of God has already seized us, the sentence is already executed, and that is too late to obtain a pardon. For in this case death answers to our casting into prison, from whence we shall never come forth till we have paid the uttermost farthing, as our Saviour represents it, *Matt. v. 25, 26.* for indeed sin is the death of the soul; and those who are under the power of sin are in a state of death; and if they die before they have a principle of new life in them, they fall under the power of death, that is, into a state of misery and punishment which is appointed for such dead souls. And therefore our redemption from death by Christ is begun in our dying to sin, and walking in newness of life, which is our conformity to the death and the resurrection of Christ, *Rom. vi. 4.* This is to be dead to sin, and to be alive to God, as Christ is: and, if we die with Christ, we shall rise with him also into immortal life, which is begun in this world, and will be perfected in the next; which is the sum of St Paul's argument, ver. 6, — 11. Thus he tells us, *Rom. viii. 10, 11.* "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the

“ spirit is life because of righteousness ;” that is, our bodies are mortal, and must die, by an irrevocable sentence which God had pronounced against Adam when he had sinned ; but the soul and spirit has a new principle of life, a principle of righteousness and holiness, by which it lives to God, and therefore cannot fall into a state of death when the body dies ; “ But if the Spirit of him “ that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, “ he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also “ quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that “ dwelleth in you ;” that is, when the divine Spirit has quickened our souls, and raised them into a new life, though our bodies must die, yet the same divine Spirit will raise them up also into immortal life.

This is the plain account of the matter ; if death arrests us while we are in a state of sin and death, we must die for ever ; but if our souls are alive to God, by a principle of grace and holiness, before our bodies die, they must live for ever. A dead soul must die with its body ; that is, sink into a state of misery, which is the death and the loss of the soul : a living soul survives the body in a state of bliss and happiness, and shall receive its body again, glorious and immortal, at the resurrection of the just. But this change of state must be made while we live in these bodies ; a dead soul cannot revive in the other world, nor a living soul die there ; and therefore this life is the day of God’s grace and patience, the next world is the place of judgment. And the reason St Peter gives why God is not hasty in executing judgment, but

is long suffering to us-ward, is, because he is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." *2 Pet. iii. 9.* Hence the apostle to the Hebrews exhorts them, "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." *Heb. iii. 7, — 11.*

There is some dispute what is meant by *to-day*, whether it be the day of this life, or such a fixed and determined day and season of grace as may end long before this life. The example of the Israelites, of whom God did swear in his wrath that they should die in the wilderness, and never enter into his rest, that is, into the land of Canaan, seems to incline to the latter sense; for this sentence, that they should not enter into his rest, was pronounced against them long before they died; for which reason they wandered forty years in the wilderness, till all that generation of men were dead. And if we are concerned in this example, then we also may provoke God to such a degree, that he may pronounce the final sentence on us, that we should never enter into heaven, long before we leave this world. Our day of grace may have a shorter period than our lives, and we may wander about in this world, as the

Israelites did in the wilderness, under an irreversible doom and sentence. And the scope of the apostle's argument seems to require this sense, which is to engage them to a speedy repentance; "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." But why to-day? Is it because our lives are uncertain, and we may die before to-morrow? No, but lest we provoke God to swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest.

All men know, that if they die in a state of sin they must be miserable for ever; and this is a reason to repent before they die. But the apostle seems to argue farther, That, by their delays and repeated provocations, they may tempt God to shorten their day of grace, and pronounce an irrevocable sentence on them, which leaves no place for repentance: which elsewhere he enforces from the example of Esau, who sold his birthright, *Heb. xii. 15, 16, 17.* "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled: lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

The stating of this matter may be thought a digression from my present design, but indeed it is not; for, if by to-day be meant the whole time of this life, that proves, that death puts a final

period to our day of grace ; and if any shorter period than this life be meant by it, it proves it much stronger : for if our sentence be passed before we die, it will not be revoked after death. But the stating this question is a matter of so great consequence to us, that, if it were a digression, it were very pardonable ; for many devout minds, when they are disturbed and clouded with melancholy, are afflicted with such thoughts as these, that their day of grace is past, that God has sworn in his wrath that they shall not enter into his rest ; and therefore their repentance and tears will be as fruitless as Esau's were, which could not obtain the blessing.

Now, for resolving this question, I shall say these three things : (1.) That the day of grace, according to the terms of the gospel, is commensurate with our lives. (2.) That notwithstanding this, men may shorten their own day of grace, and God may, in wrath and justice, confirm the sentence. (3.) That the reasons for lengthening the day of grace, together with our lives, do not extend to the other world, and therefore death must put a final period to it.

(1.) That the day of grace, according to the terms of the gospel, is commensurate with our lives. And there needs no other proof of this, but that the promise of pardon and forgiveness is made to all true penitents, without any limitation of time. Whoever believes in Christ, and repents of his sins, he shall be saved. This is the doctrine of the gospel : and, if this be true, then it is certain, that at what time soever a sinner

sincerely repenteth of his sins, he shall be saved; for otherwise some true and sincere penitents, if they repent too late, after the day of grace is expired, shall be damned; and then it is not true that all sincere penitents shall be saved.

I know but one objection against that, from the example of Esau, who, having sold his birthright, “when afterwards he would have inherited the blessing, was rejected: for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” It seems then that Esau repented too late, and so may we; his repentance could not be accepted. And, if we are concerned in this example, as the apostle intimates we are, then we may repent of our sins when it is too late, and lose the blessing, as Esau did.

But this objection is founded on a mistake of Esau's case. The repentance here mentioned is not Esau's repentance, but Isaac's; that is, when Isaac had blessed Jacob, Esau, with all his tears and importunity could not make him recall it; *i. e.* Isaac would not repent of the blessing he had given to Jacob; “I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed.” *Gen. xxvii. 33.*

Esau's case, then, was not that his repentance came too late to be accepted, but that he could not obtain the blessing, after he had sold his birthright, to which the blessing was annexed. Now, to apply this to the state of Christians: that which answers to Esau's birthright is their right and title to future glory, being made the sons of God by baptismal regeneration, and faith in Christ; to sell this birthright is to part with our hopes of

heaven for the pleasures, or riches, or honours, of this world, as Esau sold his birthright for one morsel of meat; that is, as the apostle speaks, "to fail of the grace of God," either through unbelief, which he calls the root of bitterness, a renouncing the faith of Christ, and returning to Judaism or Pagan idolatries, or by an impure and wicked life; "lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright;" *i. e.* who despise the hopes of heaven for the sinful pleasures and enjoyments of this world. Men who thus fail of the grace of God, and finally do so, as Esau finally sold his birthright, when our heavenly Father comes to give us his blessing, those great rewards he has promised in his gospel, how importunate soever they shall then be for a blessing, as Esau was, who sought it carefully with tears, they shall find no place for repentance; God will not alter his purposes and decrees for their sakes. Our Saviour has given us a plain comment on this, *Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23.* "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day," that is the day of judgment, when the blessing is to be given, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Here is Esau's importunity for the blessing. "And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." They

were profane Esaus, who had sold their birthright for a morsel of meat, and now they found no place for repentance ; our Lord will not be persuaded, by all their importunities, to alter his sentence, but, " Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

This example then of Esau does not concern our present case ; it does not prove that a wicked man, who hath spent the greatest part of his life in sin and folly, shall not be accepted and rewarded by God, if he sincerely repent of his sins, and reform his life : but it only proves, that a wicked and ungodly Christian, who prefers the pleasures and enjoyments of this world before the hopes of heaven, and defiles the soul with impure and worldly lusts, what pretences soever he may make to the blessing, or how importunate soever he may be for it, shall receive no blessing from God ; that is, that " without holiness no man shall see God ;" which is the very thing the apostle intended to prove by this example, as you may see, ver. 14.

I grant the case is different as to churches and nations ; sometimes their day of grace is fixed and determined, beyond which, without repentance, they shall no longer enjoy the light of the gospel. Thus the appearance of Christ in the flesh, and his preaching the gospel to them, was the last trial of Jerusalem, and determined the fate of that beloved city : and therefore, when Christ rode into Jerusalem, in order to his crucifixion, " when he " was come near, he beheld the city, and wept " over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, " at least in this thy day, the things which belong

" unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from
 " thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee,
 " that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee,
 " and compass thee round, and keep thee in on
 " every side, and shall lay thee even with the
 " ground, and thy children within thee : and they
 " shall not leave in thee one stone upon another :
 " because thou knewest not the time of thy visi-
 " tation." *Luke xix. 41, &c.* And this our Sa-
 vour warned them of before, *John xii. 35, 36.*
 " Yet a little while and the light is with you ;
 " walk ye while ye have the light, lest darkness
 " come upon you : for he that walketh in dark-
 " ness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye
 " have light, believe in the light, that ye may be
 " the children of the light." Which signifies,
 that unless they believed on him while he was with
 them, they must be utterly destroyed ; " the king-
 " dom of God should be taken from them, and
 " given to a nation bringing forth the fruits there-
 " of ;" as he proves by the parable of the house-
 holder who planted a vineyard, *Matt. xii. 33, &c.*

And this was in some measure the case of the
 seven churches of Asia, to whom St John directed
 his epistle, to summon them to repentance, and
 threaten them with the removal of the candlestick,
 if they did not repent. The judgments of God in
 the overthrow of some flourishing churches, and
 in transplanting the gospel from one nation to
 another, are very mysterious and unsearchable :
 but as for particular persons who enjoy the light
 of the gospel, unless they shorten their day of
 grace themselves, God does not shorten it ; as long

as they live in this world, they are capable of grace and mercy, if they truly repent.

(2.) Men may shorten their own day of grace; not by shortening the time of grace and mercy, for that lasts as long as this life does; but by outliving the possibility of repentance; and when they are past repentance, their day of grace is at an end; and this may be much shorter than their lives: that is, men may so harden themselves in sin, as to make their repentance morally impossible; and God, in his just and righteous judgments, may give up such men to a state of hardness and impenitence.

Every degree of love to sin proportionably enslaves men to the practice of it, makes repentance as uneasy and difficult as it is to "pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand," *Matt. v. 29, 30.* as painful as dying, as "crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts," which few men will submit to, *Rom. viii. 13. Col. iii. 5.*

An habit and custom of sin turns into nature, and is as difficultly altered as nature is: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good who are accustomed to do evil." *Jer. xiii. 23.*

Some sins are of such a hardening nature, that few men who are once entangled by them can ever break the snare; such as adultery, or the love of strange women, of whom Solomon tells us, "Her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead: none that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life *," *Prov. ii. 18, 19.*

* See *Prov. v. 23.* and *vi. 22, 23, 27, 28.*

Covetousness is such another hardening sin, that our Saviour tells us, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into heaven;" those who love and those who trust in their riches, *Matt. xix. 23, 24, 25.*

Those who have been once enlightened, and fall back again into infidelity; who have been instructed in the reasons of faith, and the motives of obedience; who have had the heavenly seed of God's word sown in their hearts, but have not brought forth the fruits of it; are near the curse of barren ground, which drinketh in the dews and rain of heaven, "and brings forth briers and thorns, which is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned," *Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.*

When men obstinately resist the perpetual motions and solicitations of the Holy Spirit, he withdraws from them, and gives them up to their own counsels, as we leave off persuading those who will not be persuaded.

And when the Spirit of God forsakes such men, the evil spirit seizeth them, that spirit which ruleth in the children of disobedience, *Eph. ii. 3.* For the world is divided into the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, *Col. i. 13.* and those who are not under the government of the divine Spirit, "are led captive by the devil at his will," *2 Tim. ii. 6.*; and therefore our Saviour hath taught us to pray to be delivered from evil, *απο του πονηρου*, from the evil one, that is, from the devil; for that is a hopeless state, when God gives us up to the government of evil spirits: nay, when men harden

themselves in sin, they are rejected by the good providence of God, which secures good men from, or delivers them out of, temptations, as our Saviour taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" as a father keeps a watchful eye over a dutiful child, to preserve him from any harm, and to chuse the most proper condition and circumstances of life for him, but suffers a prodigal to go where he pleases, and undo himself as fast as he can. And whoever considers the weakness and folly of human nature, and the power of temptations, must needs conclude that man given up to ruin who is rejected by the good Spirit of God, and cast out of the care of his providence.

Into this miserable state men may bring themselves by sin, which, though it does not make them incapable of mercy, if they do repent, yet it makes it morally impossible that they should repent. It is this the apostle to the Hebrews warns against, from the example of the hardness and infidelity of the Israelites in the wilderness, of whom God swears, that they should not enter into his rest: as appears from the applications he himself makes of it, *Heb. iii. 12, 13.* "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

This is a plain account of that great question concerning the length of the day of grace. Men may outlive the time of repentance, may so harden themselves in sin as to make their repentance

morally impossible, but they cannot outlive the mercies of God to true penitents. This is reason enough to discourage men from delaying their repentance, and indulging themselves in a vicious course of life, "lest they should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin," and should be forsaken by God: but it is no reason to discourage true penitents from trusting in the mercy of God, how late soever their repentance be: for while we live in this world, the door of grace and mercy is not shut against true penitents.

(3.) But yet the reasons for lengthening the day of grace and mercy do not reach beyond this life. This sufficiently appears from what I have already said; and for a further confirmation of it, I shall only add but this one comprehensive reason, *viz.* That the grace of the gospel is confined to the church; and therefore this life is the only time to obtain the remission of our sins, and a title to future glory. We shall be finally absolved from all other sins, and rewarded with eternal life, at the day of judgment; but we must sue out our pardon, and make our calling and election sure in this world.

The gospel of Christ, which is the gospel of grace, and contains the promises of pardon and immortal life, is preached only to men on earth, and concerns none else.

For this reason Christ became man, clothed with flesh and blood as we are, that he might be the Saviour of mankind; which he need not have done, had not their salvation been to be wrought in this world: for could they have been saved in

the next, his grace might have met them soon enough there. And therefore, at the birth of our Saviour the angels sang, "Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men," *Luke ii. 14.*

The sacrifice of Christ upon the cross (as all Jewish sacrifices, which were types of the sacrifice of the cross, were,) was offered for the expiation of the sins of living men, or at least considered as living, not of the dead.

He carried his blood into heaven, (as the high priest did the blood of the sacrifice into the holy of holies), there to make expiation, and to intercede for us: but this intercession, though made in heaven, relates only to men on earth, as his sacrifice did. The earthly tabernacle was a type of the church on earth; and that only, and the worshippers in it, were expiated by sacrifices.

There are two sacraments whereby the grace of the gospel is applied to us, and which are the ordinary means of our salvation, Baptism and the Lord's supper: and they are confined to the church on earth; and if they have not their effect here, they cannot have it in the next world. These unite us to Christ, as members of his body; and then the Holy Spirit, which animates the body of Christ, takes possession of us, renews and sanctifies us; but if we prove dead and barren branches in this spiritual vine, if the censures of the church do not cut us off from the body of Christ, death will; and then we can never be reunited to him, nor saved by him in the next world. Faith in Christ, and repentance

from dead works, are the great gospel-terms of pardon and salvation; and these are confined to this world : there may be something like them in the next; such a faith as makes the devils tremble, such repentance as nothing else but despairing agonies, and a hopeless and tormenting remorse : but such a faith as purifieth the heart, as conquers this present world, and brings forth the fruits of righteousness; such a repentance as reforms our lives, as undoes all our past sins, as redresses the injuries we have done to our neighbours, and the scandal we have given to the world; such a faith, and such a repentance, which alone are the true Christian graces of faith and repentance, are proper only for this life, and can be exercised only in this life, while we have this world to conquer, and the flesh to subdue to the spirit, while we can restore our ill-gotten riches, and set a visible example of piety and virtue.

From hence it is very evident, that no man who dies in a state of sin and impenitence can be saved by Christ, and by the grace of the gospel, in the world; for the whole ministration of gospel-grace is confined to this life; and if they cannot be saved by Christ, I know no other name whereby they can be saved; and thus death puts an end to all the flattering hopes of sinners.

3. Now, if this life be our only state of trial and probation for eternity, if death puts a final end to our day of grace and the time of working; then death must translate us to an immutable and unchangeable state. By this I do not mean, that as soon as we go out of these bodies our souls will

immediately be as happy or miserable as ever they shall be: the perfect rewards of good men are reserved for the day of judgment, as the final punishments of bad men are; when our Lord shall say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye
 " blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the
 " world:" and to them on the left hand, "Go, ye
 " cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the
 " devil and his angels," *Matt. xxv. 34, 41.*

But though the happiness or miseries of the next world may increase, yet the state can never alter; that is, if we shall die in a state of grace and favour with God, we shall always continue so; if we die in a state of sin under the wrath and displeasure of God, there is no altering our state in the other world; we must abide under his wrath for ever. This is the necessary consequence of what I have already said, which all aimed at this point, that once dying puts us in an immutable and unchangeable state: and therefore I shall wave any further proof of this, and only desire you seriously to consider of it.

(1.) Now, first, since death puts an end to our day of grace, and determines our final state for ever, and this death comes but once, all men must confess of what mighty consequence it is to die well, that death may find us well disposed and well prepared for another world. Men use their utmost prudence and caution in doing that which can be done but once for their whole lives, especially if the happiness of their whole lives depends on it; for no error can be corrected in what is to

be done but once; and certainly we have much more reason to prepare to die once; which restrains us to an immutable state of happiness or misery. This ought to be the work and business of our whole lives to prepare for death, which comes but once; but that once is for eternity. What unpardonable folly is it for any man to be surpris'd by death! to fall into the grave without thinking of it! To commit a mistake which may be retrieved again, to be guilty of some neglect or inadvertency, when the hurt we suffer by it may be repaired by future diligence and caution, is much more excusable, because it is not so fatal and irreparable folly. In this case experience may teach wisdom, and wisdom is a good purchase, though we pay dear for it: but a wise man will use great caution in making an experiment, which, if it fail, will cost him his life, because that can never be tried a second time; and experience is of no use in such things as can be done but once.

And this is the case of dying: we can die but once; and if we miscarry that once, we are undone for ever: and what considering man would make such dangerous experiments as sinners do every day, when their souls are the price of the experiment? who would try how long death will delay its coming? how long he may sin on safely without thinking of death or judgment? whether death will give him timely notice to repent; or whether God will give him grace to repent, if he does? who would venture the infinite hazards of a deathbed repentance? whether after a long life of sin and wickedness, a few distracted, confused,

and almost despairing sighs and groans will carry him to heaven? If such bold adventurers as these, when they have discovered their mistake and folly, could return back into this world, and live over their lives again, the hazard were not so great: but this is an experiment not to be twice made. If they sin on till they harden themselves in sin, and are forsaken of the grace of God; if death comes long before they expected, and cuts them off by surprise and without warning; if their dying and despairing agonies and horrors should not prove a truly godly sorrow, not that repentance to salvation never to be repented of, they are lost to eternity. And what wise man would expose his soul to such hazard as this? who would not take care to make his calling and election sure before death comes; and in a matter of such infinite concernment, wherein one miscarriage is irreparable, to prevent danger at a distance?

(2.) We hence learn how necessary it is for those who begin well to persevere unto the end. It is the conclusion of our lives which determines our future state; as God expressly tells by his prophet Ezekiel, chap. xviii. 21, 22, 24. "If the
" wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath
" committed, and keep my statutes, and do that
" which is lawful and right, he shall surely live,
" he shall not die: all his transgressions that he
" hath committed, they shall not be mentioned
" unto him; in his righteousness that he hath
" done he shall live.—But when the righteous
" turneth away from his righteousness, and com-
" mitteth iniquity, and doth according to all the

“ abominations that the wicked man doth, shall
“ he live? All the righteousness that he hath
“ done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass
“ that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he
“ hath sinned, in them shall he die.” And
throughout the New Testament the reward is pro-
mised only to those who continue to the end.
And what I have now discoursed gives a plain ac-
count of this: for our whole life is a state of trial
and probation; and if we leave off before our
work be done, if we stop or run backwards before
we come to the end of our race, we must lose our
reward, our crown. The Christian life is a state
of warfare, and we know the last battle gives the
final conquest: and this cannot be otherwise; be-
cause what comes last undoes what went before.
When a wicked man turns from his wickedness,
and does good, God, in infinite mercy, through
the merits and mediation of Christ, will forgive
his sins, because he has put them away from him,
and undone them by repentance and a new life.
When a righteous man turns from his righteouf-
ness, and does wickedly, his righteousness shall be
forgotten, because he has renounced it, and parted
with it, and is a righteous man no longer. Now,
when God comes to judge the world, he will judge
men as he then finds them: he will not then in-
quire what they have been, but what they are:
he will not condemn a righteous man because he
has been wicked, nor justify a wicked man because
he has been righteous; for this would be to punish
the righteous, to and reward the wicked. Such
as we are when we die, such we shall continue for

ever; and therefore it is the last scene of our lives which determines our future state.

And should not this make us very jealous and watchful over ourselves? *Heb.* iii. 12. "To take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." *Heb.* xii. 15. "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest after we have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are again entangled therein, and overcome, and it happen to us according to the true proverb, 'The dog is turned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'" This, as the same apostle tells us, "makes our latter end worse than the beginning: for it had been better for us not to have known the way of righteousness, than after we have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered to us." *2 Pet.* ii. 20, 21, 22.

Let those consider this who have been blessed with a religious education, and trained up in the exercises of piety and virtue; who have preserved themselves from the pollutions of youthful lusts, and spent their vigorous age in the service of God. Can you be contented to lose all those hopeful beginnings, to lose all your triumphs and victories over the world and the flesh? When you have outrid all the storms and hurricanes of a tempting world for so many years, will you suffer yourselves to be shipwrecked in the haven?

when you are come within view of the promised land, will you suffer your hearts to fail you? will you then murmur and rebel against God, and die in the wilderness?

There has been a very warm dispute about the perseverance of saints, whether those who are once in a state of grace shall always continue so? I will not undertake to decide this controversy; but this much I will say, (and that, I think, is all that is needful for a Christian to know about it), that to be in a state of grace, is to have an inward principle of holiness, which brings forth the fruit of a holy life; then to persevere in a state of grace, is to persevere in the practice of holiness and virtue: that many who have begun well, and have thought themselves, and have been thought by others, to be truly good men, have afterwards been overcome by the temptations of the world, and defiled themselves with the impure lusts of it: that if such men ever were good men, and in a state of grace, they fall from grace when they forsake the paths of holiness; and that those who do thus fall away, who, after promising beginnings, do all the abominations of the wicked, and live and die in such a state, shall never enter into heaven. We shall receive our final doom and sentence according to that state and condition in which death finds us. What is said upon another account, that we must call no man happy before death, is true in this sense: no man is a conqueror but he who dies so: those men deceive themselves, who confidently pretend to be still in a state of grace and favour with God, because formerly they were

good men, though now they are grown very bad; This is to persevere in a state of favour with God without persevering in holiness; which overthrows the gospel of our Saviour, and will miserably deceive those men who have no better foundation for their hopes.

(3.) We hence learn how dangerous it is to die in the actual commission of any known and wilful sin. Such men go into the other world, and go to judgment, with actual guilt upon them: they die in their sins; for they could not repent of them before they died, because they died in the commission of them, and there is no repentance, and therefore no pardon, in the next world. This has been, and, very often is, the miserable, and, I fear, the hopeless, state of a great many sinners. How many are there, who not only drink themselves into a fever, which takes some time to kill them, and gives them some time to repent of their sins, and to ask God's pardon; but drink themselves dead, or, which is much at one as to this case, drink away their reason and senses, and then fall from their horses, or down a precipice, and perish by some evil accident; or when they are inflamed with wine, forget their old friendships, and fall by each other's hands? how many others have perished in the very act of adultery, or, which is much the same, in quarrelling for a strumpet, in the rage and fury of lust? how many die in the very act of theft and robbery? All such men receive the present punishment of their sins in this world, and carry the unrepented guilt of them into the next; and if men shall be damned who die

in their sins without repentance, such men's condition is desperate. And this may be the case of any man who ventures upon a wilful sin; he may die in the very act of it, and then his repentance will come too late in the next world: and this so often happens, that no wise man would venture his soul upon it.

But there are two sins especially which this consideration should deter men from, *viz.* duelling and self-murder.

When men have such a resentment of affronts and injuries, as to revenge themselves with their swords, and either to thirst after each other's blood, or at least to stake their lives, and to venture killing, or being killed, to decide the quarrel; these men have the hearts of murderers, who would kill if they could, or, at least, would venture killing their brother to appease their resentment or revenge, which is a mortal and murdering revenge, whether it murder or not: and, therefore, if such men fall in the quarrel, as many do, without time to ask God's pardon with their last breath, they die under the guilt of murder unrepented of; though they do not kill, but are killed, yet they die with murderous intentions, with a mortal hatred and revenge; for they would have killed if they could. And St John tells us, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer; and we know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," 1 *John* iii. 15. So that these duellers do not only venture their lives, but their souls too, if they fall in the quarrel; and how little soever they value their lives, it is a little too

much to pawn their lives upon a point of honour.

As for self-murder, if we will allow it to be a sin, it is certain that no man who commits it can repent of it in this world; and there is no pardon for sins in the next world, which are not repented of in this. And yet, why we should not think it as great a sin to murder ourselves as to murder our brother, I cannot imagine, for it has all the marks of a very great sin upon it.

It is as much murder to kill ourselves as it is to kill another man; and therefore it is a breach of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." The reason against murder is the same, "For in the image of God made he man," *Gen. ix. 6.* and he who kills himself destroys God's image, as much as he who kills another man. The more unnatural the sin is, or the greater obligations we have to preserve the life of the persons whom we kill, the greater the sin is. To murder a kind friend, and a benefactor, is a greater evil than to murder a stranger; to murder a parent or a child, a wife or a husband, is still a greater evil, because they are so much nearer to ourselves: and if the nearness of the relation increases the sin, nobody is so near to us as ourselves, and, therefore, there is no such unnatural murder as this.

The excuses which are made for self-murder will not justify the murder of any other man in the world. Though we should see a friend whom we love like ourselves labouring under intolerable pains, or insupportable misfortunes or calamities of life; though he should importune and beseech us to put an end to his suffering, by putting an

end to a miserable life; though out of great kindness and compassion we heartily desire to follow him to his grave, yet we must not kill him; neither the laws of God nor man will allow this. And yet if self-love be the measure of our love to other men, and will justify self-murder, when we are grown weary of life, when we either despise the world, or think it best to make our escape out of it, I cannot imagine why we may not do the same kindness for a friend or brother when he desires, as we may do for ourselves: the reason is the same in both; and if it will not justify both, it can justify neither.

For there is no foundation that I know of for what some pretend, that God has given us greater power over our own lives than over other men's. We find no such power given us in scripture, which is the only revelation of God's will; and I am sure Nature teaches us no such thing; nay, Nature teaches the quite contrary. The natural aversion to death, and the natural principles of self-preservation, were not only intended to make us cautious of any hurt or mischief which other men may do us, but to make us careful to do no hurt to, much less to destroy, ourselves; and therefore the voice of Nature is, that we must preserve our own lives and beings.

When God made us, he did not make us the absolute lords and masters of ourselves; we cannot dispose of ourselves as we please, but are his creatures and subjects, and must receive laws from him, and that in such instances wherein the injury is only done to ourselves. We must not abuse

our own bodies by intemperance and luxury, or lust, though neither the public or any private persons are injured by it; and if we have not power over our own bodies in lesser instances, much less to kill them.

And if it be a sin to destroy our own lives, it is the most mortal and damning sin, for it destroys soul and body together, because it makes our repentance impossible; unless men can repent of their sin, and obtain God's pardon for it, before they have committed it, or can repent and obtain their pardon in the next world. Did men seriously consider this, it is impossible that the greatest shame and infamy, want or suffering, or whatever it is that makes them weary of life, should be thought so intolerable as to make them force their passage into the other world to escape it, when such a violent and unnatural escape will cost them their souls. Men may be in such evil circumstances as may make death desirable; but no considering man will exchange the sufferings of this life for the endless miseries of the next. If we cannot destroy our lives, and put an end to our present sufferings, without destroying our souls too, we must be contented to live on, and bear our lot patiently in this world; which, whatever it is, is much more easy and tolerable than to be eternally miserable.

And yet God forbid that I should pronounce a final and peremptory sentence upon all those unfortunate persons who have died by their own hands. We know not what allowances God may make for some men's opinion of the lawfulness of

it, and for the distraction of other men's thoughts and passions, through a settled melancholy, or some violent temptation. My business is not to limit the sovereign and perogative grace of God, but to declare the nature of the thing, according to the terms of the gospel. To murder ourselves is the most unnatural murder; it is a damning sin, and such as no man can repent of in this world: and therefore, unless God forgive it without repentance, it can never be forgiven; and the gospel of Christ gives us no commission to preach forgiveness of sin without repentance. The gospel-grace, which only forgives penitents, cannot save such men; and he is a very bold man, and ventures very far upon unpromised and uncovenanted mercy, who will commit a sin which the grace of the gospel cannot pardon.

All that I have to add under this head, is the case of those who die in despair of God's mercy. This is commonly thought a very hopeless state; for to despair of the mercy of God is a great sin, and therefore such men die in the actual commission of sin unrepented of, and bystanders are apt to suspect their despair to be little better than their final doom and sentence. And yet many times we see men labouring under despair in their last agonies, who have, to all outward appearance, lived very innocent and virtuous lives; and it is hard to judge so severely of them as to think they were secret hypocrites, and that God has finally rejected them, because they pass such a severe judgment upon themselves.

Now, I confess, despair is as uncomfortable a

state as any man can die in ; but I cannot think it so fatal and dangerous as some imagine : for let us consider what the nature of despair is, and wherein the sinfulness of it consists.

To disbelieve the promises of grace and mercy made to true penitent sinners by Jesus Christ is infidelity, not despair : and this, indeed, is a great and unpardonable sin ; for it is to renounce the faith of Christ, and the grace of the gospel. But this is not what we commonly call despair. Such men believe the gospel of Christ, and all the promises of it, as firmly as others do : they do not doubt but God will forgive all true penitents through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ ; and therefore are as true and sincere believers as those who do not despair : but their despair is in the application of these promises to themselves ; that is, they fear that they are not within the terms and conditions of gospel-grace : that they are not true penitents ; that their day of grace is expired, and now they shall not receive the blessing, though, as Esau did, they seek it earnestly with tears ; or, it may be, that they are reprobates, who have no right to the promises of the gospel.

Now, if these men may upon all other accounts be very good Christians, but are either oppressed with melancholy, or disturbed with false and mistaken notions of religion, can we think that their melancholy, or mistakes, which make them pass so false a judgment upon themselves, shall make God condemn them too, who knows them better than they know themselves ? Should a man who has a delirious fancy accuse himself of theft, or

murder, or treason, which he was never guilty of, would a just and righteous judge, who certainly knows that he is not guilty of those crimes, condemn him, only because he condemns himself? Suppose a man who is in the right way to heaven should be persuaded by some travellers he meets that he has mistaken his way, and upon this he should fall into great horrors and agonies, and give himself for lost, is this man ever the farther off heaven, because he is persuaded that he has mistaken the way?

The false judgments dying men make of themselves, either through enthusiasm presumption, or despair, should not determine their final state. Men may go to hell with all the triumphs of a deluded fancy, which promises nothing less than eternal glories; and those who go trembling out of this world may find themselves happily mistaken in the next. It is a wrong notion of justifying faith, which makes men conclude despair to be so damning and unpardonable a sin. If justifying faith were nothing else but a strong belief and persuasion that we are justified, there were good reason to conclude despair to be a mortal sin, because it is a direct contradiction to justifying faith. Nay, if the justifying act of faith were an actual reliance and recumbency on Christ for salvation, despair must be very mortal; because while men are under those agonies, they do not, they cannot, rely on Christ for salvation; for they believe that Christ has cast them off, and will not save them. But to believe in Christ, that he is the Saviour of the world, that he has made expiation for our sins,

and intercedes for us at the right hand of God, and is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him; that he will save all true penitent sinners, and will save us if we be true penitents: I say, if such a faith as this, when it brings forth the genuine fruits of repentance and a holy life, be a true justifying faith, this is consistent with the blackest despair; and then men may be in a justified state, though they are ever so strongly persuaded that they are reprobates. A very good man may have his fancy disturbed, and may pass a false judgment upon himself; but this is no reason for God to condemn him, no more than God will justify a presuming and enthusiastic hypocrite, because he justifies himself.

(4.) If death puts a final end to our work and labour, and shuts up our accounts, then it concerns us to do all the good we can while we live: "Whatever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with all our might, seeing there is no wisdom, nor knowledge, nor working in the grave, whither we are hasting." Not that the next world is an idle and unactive state, where we shall know nothing, and have nothing to do; but death puts an end to our working for the other world: nothing can be brought to our account at the day of judgment but the good we do while we live here; for this only we shall receive our reward proportionably to the increase and wise improvement of our talents.

And is not this a good reason why we should begin to serve God betimes, and take all opportunities of doing good, since we have only a short

life to work in for eternity? There are great and glorious rewards provided for good men; but those shall have the brightest crowns who do the most good in the world, who "are rich in good works," and lay up for themselves treasures in heaven."

Indeed, the meanest place in heaven is a happiness too great for us to conceive; I am sure, much greater than our greatest deserts: but since our bountiful Lord will reward all the good service we do, why should we neglect doing any good, when such neglects will lessen our reward? why should we be contented to lose any degrees of glory? This is a holy ambition to be as good and to be as happy as God can make us.

This is never thought of by those men who have no greater designs than to escape hell; but as for the glories of heaven they can be contented with the least share of them. No man will ever get to heaven who so despises the glories of it; and if a late repentance should open your eyes not only to see your sins, but to alter your opinions of this world and the next, yet we can never recall our past time; and that little time that remains, which is the very dregs and sediments of our lives, the dead and unactive scene, will minister very few opportunities of doing good; and if it did, we are capable of doing very little; and if we get to heaven, that will be all: but the bright and triumphant crowns shall be bestowed upon those who have improved their time and their talents better.

It is the good we do while we live that shall be rewarded; and therefore we must take care to do

good while we live. It is well when men, who do no good while they live, will remember to do some good when they die : but if God should accept such presents as these, yet it will make great abatements in the account, that they keep their riches themselves as long as they could, and would part with nothing to God till they could keep it no longer. It is not the gift, but the mind of the giver, that is accepted. Under the gospel, God is pleased with a living sacrifice ; but the offerings of the dead (and such these testamentary charities are, which are intended to have no effect as long as we live) are no better than dead sacrifices ; and it may be questioned whether they will be brought into the account of our lives, if we do no good while we live. The case is different as to those who did all the good they could while they lived, and when they saw they could live no longer, took care to do good after death. Such surviving charities as these prolong our lives, and add daily to our account : when such men are removed into the other world, they are doing good in this world still, they have a stock a-going below, the increase and improvements of which will follow them into the other world. Men who have been charitable all their lives may prolong their charity after death ; and this will be brought to the account of their lives : but I cannot see how a charity which commences after death can be called doing good while we live ; and then it cannot belong to the account of our lives. All that can be said for it is this, that they make their wills, whereby they bequeath these charities while they

live ; and therefore their bequeathing these charities is an act of their lives ; but they never intend they shall take place while they live, but after their death. And when they never intended their charity to be an act of their lives, I know not why God should account it so. These deathbed charities are too like a deathbed repentance ; men seem to give their estates to God and the poor, just as they part with their sins, when they can keep them no longer. This is much such a charity, as it is devotion to bequeath our dead bodies to the church or chancel, which we would never visit while we lived.

But yet, as I have already intimated, this is the only way to prolong our lives, and to have an increasing account after death, to lay the foundations of some great good to the world, which shall outlive us ; which, like seed sown in the earth, shall spring up, and yield a plentiful harvest, while we sleep sweetly in the dust : such as the religious education of our children and families, which may propagate itself in the world, and last many ages after we are dead ; the endowment of public schools and hospitals ; in a word, whatever is for the relief of the necessitous, or for the instruction and good government of mankind, when we are gone. To do good while we live, and to lay designs of great good to future generations, will both come into our account, and this may extend the account of our lives much beyond the short period of them in this world.

(5.) If death puts an end to our account, methinks a dying bed is a little of the latest to begin

it; for this is to begin just where we must end. The account of our lives is the account of the good or evil we have done while we lived: and what account can a dying man give of this, who has spent his whole life in sin and wickedness? If he must be judged according to what he hath done in the body, how sad is his account, and how impossible is it for him to mend it now? for when he is just a dying, it is too late for him to begin to live. If "without holiness no man shall see God," how hopeless is his condition who has lived a wicked and profligate life all his days, and is now past living, and therefore past living a holy life? A man who is confined to a sick and dying bed is incapable of exercising the virtues of life; his time of work is over, almost as perfectly over as if he were dead; and therefore his account is finished, and he must expect his reward according to what he has already done.

No, you will say, he may still repent of his sins; and a true penitent shall find mercy even at his last gasp. Now, I readily grant, that all true penitents shall be saved, whensoever they truly repent; but it is hard to think, that any dying sorrows, or the dying vows and resolutions of sinners, shall be accepted by God for true repentance. The mistakes of this matter are very fatal, and therefore I shall briefly explain it.

In expounding the promises of the gospel, we must take care to reconcile the gospel to itself, and not make one part of it contradict or overthrow another. Now, as the gospel promises pardon of sin to true repentance, so it makes ho-

liness of life as necessary a condition of salvation as true repentance. "Without holiness no man shall see God," *Heb. xii. 14.* "God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not only not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good," *Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.* "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," *Gal. vi. 7, 8.* The promises of forgiveness to repentance are not more express than these texts are, which declare, that we shall be rewarded according to our works: and we have as much reason to believe the one as the other; and if we believe the gospel, we must believe them both: and then repentance and a holy life are both necessary to salvation; and then the dying sorrows of sinners, who have lived very wicked lives, and are past mending them now, cannot be true saving repentance. If sorrow for sin, without a holy life, can carry men to heaven, then I am sure holiness is not necessary; then men may see God without holiness; and then the promises of pardon to repentance (if this dying sorrow be true repentance) overthrows the ne-

cessity of a holy life; and the necessity of a holy life contradicts the promises of pardon to such penitents; and then either one or both of them must be false.

To state this matter plainly, and in a few words, we must distinguish between two kinds of repentance: (1.) The baptismal repentance; (2.) Repentance upon a relapse, or falling into any known and wilful sin.

(1.) By baptismal repentance I mean that repentance which is necessary in adult persons, in order to their receiving Christian baptism. This is the repentance which is most frequently mentioned in the New Testament, and to which the promise of remission and forgiveness is annexed. This our Saviour preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," *Matt.* iv. 17.; this he gave authority to his apostles to preach, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations," *Luke* xxiv. 47. Now, this repentance, both as to Jews and Heathens, who embraced the faith of Christ, was renouncing all their former sins, and false superstitions, or idolatrous worship; and this qualified them for baptism, in which they obtained the remission of all their sins in the name of Christ. And for this reason remission of sins is promised to repentance; because all such penitents are received to baptism, which is the washing of regeneration, which washes away all their sins, and puts them into a state of grace and favour with God; as St Peter tells the Jews, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of

“Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,” *Acts* ii. 38. And much to the same purpose Ananias told St Paul, “Arise, and be baptized, wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord,” *Acts* xxii. 17. And I know not any one text in the New Testament wherein the remission of sin is absolutely promised to repentance, but what must be understood of this baptismal repentance; and then repentance and remission of sin are inseparably annexed: because such penitents wash away all their sins in baptism, and come pure and undefiled out of that mystical fountain which is set open for sin and for uncleanness, to wash in and to be clean.

Now, I grant, should any person who comes to baptism, rightly qualified and disposed, with a sincere repentance, and stedfast faith in Christ, die soon after he is baptized, before he has time and opportunity to exercise any of the graces of the Christian life, such a man shall go to heaven without actual holiness: the remission of his sins in baptism, upon his repentance, will save him though he have not time to bring forth the fruits of repentance in a holy life. And this is the only case I know of wherein a penitent can be saved without actual holiness, *viz.* at baptism, by grace and regeneration. Only the primitive church, and I think with very good reason, allowed the same to martyrdom, when it prevented the baptism of young converts; as we know, under the Pagan persecutions, young converts, who made bold confessions of their faith in Christ, were hurried away to martyrdom before they had opportunity of

being baptized. But such men were baptized in their own blood, and that supplied the want of water-baptism, which they could not have. Now in this case also, if martyrdom be instead of baptism, as the primitive church thought it, then had any Heathen been converted from a lewd and profligate life to the faith of Christ, and been immediately apprehended and hauled to martyrdom, before he could either be baptized, or give any other testimony of the reformation of his life and manners but by dying a martyr, this man also would go to heaven without actual holiness of life; as a baptized penitent, who dies immediately after his baptism, shall.

And this seems to me to give the best account of the case of the penitent thief upon the cross; which one example has encouraged so many sinners to delay their repentance to the last minute, and has destroyed so many souls by such delays. His case seems to be this: It is probable he had heard of Christ, and the fame of his great miracles, before; and that opinion some had of him, that he was the Messias whom God had promised to send into the world: for we can hardly think that any man who lived in those days should never have heard of Christ, whose fame went through the whole nation. But yet the course of life this thief led gave him no great curiosity to inquire into such matters, till he was apprehended for robbery, and condemned to die at the same time with Christ. This extraordinary accident made him more curiously inquire after him, and learn all the circumstances of his apprehension, and trial

and usage, and behaviour and answers, especially when he saw him, and was to die with him : and, in short, he observed so much as convinced him, that he was the true Messias, though he saw him nailed in so shameful a manner to the cross.

Now, if this was his case, and we must suppose this, or something like it, unless we will say that he was miraculously inspired upon the cross with the faith of Christ, without knowing any thing of him before, which has no foundation in the story, and is without any precedent or example; I say, if this was his case, according to the principles laid down, we must grant, that if this thief had renounced his wicked course of life, and professed his faith in Christ, and being baptized in his name, though he had immediately suffered upon the cross, he must have gone directly to heaven or paradise, as Christ promised him he should, by virtue of remission of all his sins in baptism. Nay, we must grant further, that if, instead of baptism, he had at that time died a martyr for the profession of his faith in Christ, this would have supplied the place of baptism, and have translated him to paradise. All then that we have to inquire is, whether his confession of Christ upon the cross might not as well supply the want of water-baptism as martyrdom; nay, whether it were not equivalent to martyrdom itself, and might not reasonably be accepted by our Saviour as such. Water-baptism he could not have; a martyr he could not die, for he died a malefactor; but he confessed his faith in Christ when he saw him hanging upon the cross, which was a more

glorious act of faith than to have died upon the cross for him. He confessed Christ when his own disciples fled from him, and when Peter himself denied him; and discovered his glory through the meanest disguise that ever it was concealed under, even in this world: and why should not this pass for the faith and confession of martyrdom? And then, the thief upon the cross was saved as by baptism; which is, "not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God," 1 *Pet.* iii. 21.: which description of baptism gives us a plain reason why martyrdom should supply the place of baptism, and is as good a reason why the thief's confession of Christ upon the cross should do so.

This example then of the thief upon the cross is no reasonable encouragement to any baptized Christian to live a wicked life, and delay his repentance till the hour of death, in hopes of being saved at last, as he was; for he was saved as new repenting converts are, by baptism; not as baptized sinners hope to be, by a deathbed sorrow, and remorse of conscience.

And yet this is the only example which with any shew of reason is alleged to prove the sufficiency of a deathbed repentance; for the parable of the labourers who were called to work in the vineyard at different hours, some early in the morning, others at the third, the sixth, the eleventh hour of the day, is nothing at all to this purpose, *Matt.* xx. 1, &c. The several hours of the day in that parable do not signify the several hours of men's lives, but the different ages of the world;

and therefore those labourers who are called into the vineyard about the eleventh hour of the world, that is, towards the end, or in the last age, of the world, might be called at the beginning of their lives, and work on to the end of them: for the design of that parable is to show, that the Gentiles, who were called into the vineyard, or received into the church of Christ, toward the conclusion of the world, should be admitted to equal privileges and rewards with the Jews, who were God's ancient people, and had been called into the vineyard early in the morning; which occasioned their murmuring against the goodman of the house, as we know the Jews murmured upon this account: and nothing more prejudiced them against the gospel of our Saviour than that the Gentiles were received into the church without circumcision. The same thing our Saviour represents in the parable of the prodigal. The return of the prodigal to his father's house is the conversion of the Gentiles, who were the younger brother, and had been a great prodigal for many ages: the elder brother, who always lived at home with his father, was the Jewish church: but when this young prodigal was received by his father with feasting and music, and all the expressions of joy, his elder brother grew jealous of him, and thought himself much injured by his father's fondness of the returning prodigal, and refused to come in and bear his part in the solemnity; as the Jews rejected the gospel, because the Gentiles were received into the church, *Luke* *xv. 13, &c.*

And that this must be the true meaning of the parable of the labourers appears from this, that those who were called into the vineyard at the eleventh hour received a reward equal to those who had borne the heat and burden of the day ; which is agreeable enough, if we expound it of different ages of the church : for there is great reason why the Gentiles, though they came later into the vineyard, should be made at last equal with the Jews, who were God's ancient people. But if we expound this of entering upon the vineyard at different ages of our life, it seems very unequal, that those who begin a life of virtue just at the conclusion of their lives should be rewarded with those who have spent their whole lives in the service of God ; that is, that those who do very little good shall receive as great a reward as those who do a hundred times as much ; which is a direct contradiction to the scope and design of our Saviour's parable about the pounds and talents, *Matt. xxv. 14, &c. Luke xx. 12, &c.* But suppose it were to be understood, not of the Jewish and Christian church, but of particular Christians ; yet their being called to work in the vineyard, at what hour soever it was, though the eleventh hour, was their admission into the Christian church, their first conversion to the faith of Christ ; and for this time they laboured in the vineyard, lived a holy and religious life. And I readily grant, should a Jew, a Turk, or a Pagan, be converted to Christianity in the eleventh hour, in his declining age, and from that time live in obedience to the gospel of Christ, there is no doubt but he

shall be greatly rewarded. But what is this to any of us, who were born of Christian parents, baptized in our very infancy, instructed in the Christian religion from the very beginning, and have always professed the faith of Christ, but lived like Pagans and infidels? We are not called into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but early in the morning; and though men who are called at the last hour shall be rewarded for that hour's work, this does not prove that men who, entering into the vineyard in the morning, play or riot away their time till the eleventh hour, shall receive a day's wages for an hour's work.

But suppose this too, yet it will not answer the case of a deathbed repentance: such men delay not till the eleventh hour, but till night comes, when they can do no work at all; whereas those who came last into the vineyard wrought an hour. Now, that God, in infinite grace and goodness, will reward men for one hour's work, does not prove that he will reward those who do no work, but spend their whole day idly or wickedly, and only ask his pardon at night for not working.

(2.) But what a fatal cheat these men put upon themselves will better appear, if we consider the second kind of repentance, which is repentance after baptism, when men are relapsed into the commission of new sins, after they have washed away all their old sins in the laver of regeneration, which is the only notion of repentance concerned in this question: for such sinners, when they come to die, are to repent of a whole life spent in wickedness after baptism; and this extremely alters the

case: for though faith and repentance (as that repentance signifies a sorrow for past sins, and the purposes and resolutions of a new life) be the only conditions of baptismal remission and justification, yet, when we are baptized, we then covenant with God for an actual obedience and holiness of life, "to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" and therefore mere repentance, or a sorrow for sin, with the most solemn resolutions and vows of a new life, (which is all the repentance dying men can have), cannot, according to the terms of the gospel, be accepted instead of the obedience and holiness of our lives. Had the gospel said, You shall either abstain from all sin, and do good while you live, or repent of all your sins when you die; this had been a sufficient encouragement for a deathbed repentance; but when holiness of life is made the necessary condition of seeing God, and "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men," *Rom. i. 18.*; when we are so expressly forewarned that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God: "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," *1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.*; when our Saviour expressly tells us, that it is only the doers of the word that are blessed; that "not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of

“ heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father
“ which is in heaven ;” that as for all others,
what pretences soever they make, “ he will pro-
“ fess to them, I never knew you ; depart from
“ me, ye that work iniquity :” I say, whoever,
after such express declarations as these, can per-
suade himself, that sorrow for sin, and some good
resolutions and fair promises upon a deathbed,
shall carry him to heaven, though he has done no
good in his life, and has been guilty of all, or
many, of those sins which the gospel has threatened
with damnation, makes void the whole gospel of
our Saviour.

But you’ll say, Is there no place then for repent-
ance under the gospel ? no remission of sins com-
mitted after baptism ? God forbid ! for who then
could be saved ? Our Saviour has taught us to
pray every day, “ Forgive us our trespasses, as
“ we forgive them that trespass against us ;” and
Matt. xviii. 21, 22. has taught us to forgive our
brother, though he offend against us seventy times
seven, in imitation of God’s goodness in forgiving
us : and, if we must forgive so often, surely God
will forgive more than once.

But then repentance after baptism requires not
only a sorrow for sin, and some good purposes
and resolutions of a new life for the future, but
the actual forsaking of sin, and amendment of our
lives. In baptism “ God justifies the ungodly,”
Rom. iv. 5, that is, how wicked soever men have
been, whenever they repent of their sins, renounce
their former wicked practices, and believe in Christ,
and enter into covenant with him by baptism, all

their former sins are immediately forgiven and washed away, without expecting the actual reformation of their lives. This was plainly the case both of Jewish and Heathen converts, who, upon their profession of faith in Christ, and renouncing their former wicked lives, whatever they had been, were immediately received to baptism; as St Peter exhorted the Jews, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost," *Acts* ii. 38. and the same day there were three thousand baptized. This is gospel-grace, which is the purchase of Christ's blood, that the greatest sinners, upon their repentance and faith in Christ, are received to mercy, and wash away all their sins in baptism: but when they are in covenant they shall then be judged according to the terms and conditions of that covenant, which requires the practice of an universal righteousness. Such persons must not expect, as St Paul reasons, that if they continue still in sin, grace will abound; the very covenant of grace, which we enter into at baptism, confutes all such ungodly hopes; "for how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life," *Rom.* vi. 1, 2, 3, 4. This is the difference St Paul makes between the grace of the gospel in receiving the greatest sinners to

baptism, and justifying them by the blood of Christ; and what the gospel requires of baptized Christians to continue in this justified state. In the first case, nothing is required but faith and repentance; upon which account we are so frequently said "to be justified by faith, not by the deeds of the law; to be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; to be saved by grace through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast." And I believe, upon inquiry it will be found, that justification by faith always relates to this baptismal justification, when by baptism we are received into covenant with God, and into a justified state; only for the sake of Christ, and through faith in his blood: which one thing well considered would put an end to most of the disputes about justification, and about faith and works; which I cannot explain now; but shall only observe, that the constant opposition between justification by the faith of Christ and justification by circumcision and the works of the law, to the obedience of which they were obliged by circumcision, is a manifest proof that justification by faith is our justification by the faith of Christ in baptism, which is our admission into the Christian church, makes us the members of Christ, and the children of God, which is a state of grace and justification; as circumcision formerly made them God's peculiar people in covenant with him, which is the justification of circumcision, *Gal. v. 2, 3*. And justification by faith and justification by circumcision would not be duly opposed, if they did not relate to the same kind of

justification, that is, that justification which is the immediate effect of our being in covenant with God.

But now, when we are justified by a general repentance and faith in Christ at baptism, we also vow a conformity to the death of Christ, by “ dying to sin, and walking in newness of life;” that is, we vow an universal obedience to all the laws of righteousness which the gospel requires of us, as circumcision made them debtors to the whole law; which is the reason why the works of the law, and the evangelical righteousness which the faith of Christ requires of us, are so often opposed in this dispute, the one the righteousness of the law, or of works, the other the righteousness of faith: and therefore, as circumcision could not justify those who transgressed the law, no more will faith justify those who disobey the gospel; but “ the righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after “ the Spirit.” *Rom. ii. 13, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. Rom. viii. 4.*

Now the necessary consequence of this is, that mere sorrow for sin, and the mere vows and resolutions of obedience, without actual holiness and obedience of life according to the terms and conditions of the gospel, will not save a baptized Christian: for mere sorrow for sin, and vows of obedience, will be accepted only in baptism; but when we are baptized, we must put our vows in execution, or we fall from our baptismal grace and justification: and therefore, when we relapse into a sin after baptism, no repentance will be accepted but that which actually reforms our lives; for

baptismal grace is not ordinarily repeated, no more than we can repeat our baptism.

This I take to be the true meaning of that very difficult place, *Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.* "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame." This severe passage occasioned some dispute about the canonical authority of this epistle; for it was thought, that the apostle here excluded all men from the benefit of repentance who fall into sin again after baptism. But it is certain this is not the apostle's meaning, nor do the words import any such doctrine; but his meaning is, either that men who have been baptized, and thoroughly instructed in the Christian religion, may sin themselves into an impossibility of repentance, (which is the most ordinary interpretation of the words, and which sense I gave before of them, and is in part the true sense, though, I think, not the whole). or that men after baptism may fall into such a state as nothing can deliver them out of but baptismal grace and regeneration; and since baptism cannot be repeated, the state of such men is hopeless and desperate, according to the terms of the gospel, however God may deal with them by a sovereign and prerogative grace: for though we can expect and rely on no other grace but what God has

promised in his gospel, yet God does not absolutely confine himself, nor must we confine his grace; and this he tells in the case of all apostates from the Christian faith. The understanding of this is necessary to my present purpose; and therefore I shall briefly explain it.

1st, That the apostle here speaks of persons who were baptized, is plain from the words, "those who were once enlightened," the *αὐτὸς ποριθεύων*, are those who have been once baptized; for so *corroborat*, and *porismos*, in the ancient writers, signifies baptism; as Justin Martyr himself tells us, in his second apology, that baptism is called *porismos*, or illuminations; because their minds are enlightened by it, and, being once enlightened, plainly refers it to baptism, which can be administered but once. And what follows proves this to be the meaning of it, "and have tasted of the heavenly gift;" that is, saith St Chrysostom, received remission of his sins in baptism: "and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," the Holy Spirit being given at baptism; "and have tasted of the good word of God," been instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, which in the apostolic age immediately followed baptism; for men were then admitted to baptism immediately upon their profession of repentance and faith in Christ, and were afterwards instructed in the Christian religion: "and the powers of the world to come;" that is, those miraculous gifts and powers which were bestowed on the apostles, for a confirmation of the faith of Christ, and which most Christians did in some degree or other par-

take of in baptism. This is a plain description of baptism, with the effects and consequents of it.

2dly, That he speaks of such as after baptism totally apostatize from the faith of Christ, is as plain: for they are *παπιστάτες*, "those who fall away." From what? From their Christian profession, which they made at their baptism; that is, who renounce the faith of Christ, and turn Jews or Heathens again: for these men "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh," and put him to open shame;" that is, they declare him to be an impostor, as the Jews did when they crucified him, which is as much crucifying him again, and exposing him to public shame and infamy, as they can possibly do. But now this description can relate only to total apostasies; for whatever sins professed Christians are guilty of, though thereby they reproach their Lord and Saviour, yet they do not declare him to be an impostor, who justly suffered on the cross, and whom they would condemn to the same ignominious death again if they could: nay, those who are conquered by some powerful and surprising fears to deny Christ, as Peter did, or to offer sacrifice to idols, as many Christians did under the heathen persecution, and recover themselves again by repentance, are not included in this severe sentence; for such men do really believe in Christ still, do not heartily renounce their baptismal faith, and therefore do not lose their baptism, though in word and deed at present they deny Christ. The case of such men indeed is very dangerous; for our Saviour tells us, "Whosoever shall deny me

“ before men, him will I also deny before my
 “ Father which is in heaven,” *Matt. x. 33.*
 Those who through fear of men persist in such a
 denial, shall not be saved by a secret and dissem-
 bled faith; for we must not only believe in Christ,
 but we must openly profess our faith in him: but
 such men may be recovered by repentance, and
 by a bold profession of Christ in new dangers and
 temptations; these are lapsed Christians, but not
 apostates, as Julian was, who hated the name and
 religion of Christ; and therefore they were ad-
 mitted to repentance in the Christian church, as
 not having lost their baptismal faith, tho’ through
 fear they denied it.

Of these total apostates the apostle tells, that “ it
 “ is impossible to renew them again unto repent-
 “ ance,” ἀνακαινίζεν εἰς μετάνοιαν, or διὰ, as St Chry-
 sostom renders it, to make them new creatures
 again by baptismal repentance; for so he tells us,
 that ἀνακαινισθῆναι, καινὸν γενεσθῆαι, that to be renewed
 is to be made new, which can be done only by
 baptism, τὸ γὰρ καινὸς ποιῆσθαι τῷ λύτρῳ μόνον ἐστὶ, bap-
 tism only makes us new creatures.

The danger, then, of these men’s case, as the
 apostle represents it, is this, that they having to-
 tally apostatized from the faith of Christ, together
 with their faith have lost their baptism, and are
 become Jews and Pagans again: now, Jews and
 Pagans can never be made Christians without bap-
 tism, wherein they are regenerated and new-made:
 and by the same reason these apostatized Christians,
 who are become Jews and Pagans, can never be-
 come Christians again, unless they be rebaptized;

and that they cannot be, because there is but one baptism in the Christian church. And therefore, though we could suppose that they should believe again and repent of their sins, they could never recover a legal right and title to mercy, and the promises of the gospel-covenant: faith and repentance will not justify a Heathen without baptism; for "he that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved," are the express terms of the covenant; and therefore the condition of apostates is very hopeless, who are relapsed into such a state, that nothing but baptismal grace and regeneration, nothing but being new-made and new-born, can save them; and that they cannot have, for they must not be baptized again. A Christian must be but once born, no more than a man is; which possibly is the reason why St Peter tells us of such apostates, "that their latter end is worse with them than their beginning," 2 *Pet.* ii. 20. for Jews and Heathens, how wicked soever they were, might wash away all their sins in baptism; but such apostates "are like a sow that was washed, and returns again to her wallowing in the mire." When they had washed away their sins and infidelity in baptism, they return to their forsaken Paganism again, and lose the effect of their first washing: and there is no second baptismal washing to be had.

The apostle does not say that it is impossible those men should be saved, but it is impossible they should be regenerated again by baptism, which is the only gospel-state of salvation. If any such men be saved, they must be saved, as I observed

before, by uncovenanted grace and mercy: they are in the state of unbaptized Jews and Heathens, not of Christians, who have a covenant right to God's promises. And I would desire the baptized atheists and infidels of our age to consider of this, whole case is so very like this, if it be not the same, that it should make them afraid of setting up for wits to such infinite peril of their souls.

To apply this, then, to our present purpose: What I have now discoursed plainly shows, that a baptized Christian must not always expect to be saved by such grace as saves and justifies in baptism; baptismal grace is inseparably annexed to baptism, and can be no more repeated than baptism. This makes the case of apostates so desperate, and infidelity can be washed away only in baptism; and those who apostatize after baptism can never be baptized again; and therefore can never have any covenant title to pardon and forgiveness.

And this proportionably holds good in our present case: the grace of baptism washes away all the sins of our past lives, how many, how great, soever they have been, only upon our profession of their faith in Christ, and repentance of all our sins, and vows of obedience to the laws of Christ for the future: but whoever after baptism lives a wicked and a profligate life, and hopes to be saved at last only by faith in Christ, and sorrow for his sins, and vows of living better, when he is just a-dying, will be miserably mistaken; for this is only the grace of baptism, which can never be repeated, not the rule and measure

whereby God will judge baptized Christians, who have had time and opportunity of exercising those Christian graces which they vow at their baptism.

A man who retains the faith of Christ, though he lives wickedly, does not forfeit his baptism, but shall be forgiven whenever he repents and forsakes his sins, and lives a holy life: but if he delays this so long, that he has no time to amend his life, that he can do nothing but be sorry for his sins, and vow a new life; I cannot promise him that this will be accepted at the hour of death, because the gospel requires a holy life, not merely a deathbed sorrow and remorse of sin. Sorrow for sin, and vows of a new life, will be accepted at baptism, as the beginnings of a new life; but that is no reason why they should be accepted at our death, when they are only the sorrowful conclusion of a wicked life. God will receive us to grace and mercy at baptism, upon our solemn vows of living to him; but he has nowhere promised to accept of our dying vows instead of holiness and obedience, as a recompense for a whole life spent in wickedness and folly. It is very seldom that such dying sorrows, or dying vows, are sincere and hearty: but were they ever so sincere, (as sometimes, though very rarely, we see that men who recover from a dangerous sickness, keep the vows and promises they then made, and that is a good proof that they were very sincere in making them), yet do I not know any one promise in scripture to a dying repentance: the gospel requires actual holiness of life; and when God cuts off such men in their sins,

without allowing them any time to reform their lives, it is very suspicious that he rejects their sorrows and their vows; as Wisdom threatens, *Prov. i. 24, &c.* "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded—I will laugh also at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh—Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." I will not prejudge the final state of these men; but if God accept of such a deathbed repentance, which cannot produce the actual fruits of righteousness, it is more than he has promised, and more than he has given us authority to preach; and we should consider what infinite hazard we run by such delays of repentance, that we cannot be saved, by the express terms of the gospel; but if we be saved, we must be saved by an unpromised and uncovenanted grace and mercy; which, how good soever God may be, we have no reason to rely on. This, I know, will be thought very severe, but I cannot help it: it may terrify dying sinners, but there is less danger in that than in nursing men up in the deluding hopes of a deathbed repentance, which renders all the arguments and motives to a holy life ineffectual, and I fear eternally destroys as many as trust in it.

If you ask why faith and repentance, without the actual obedience of our lives, should not as well be accepted by God on our deathbed as it is at our baptism? I shall ask another very plain question, Why a husbandman who hires labourers

into his vineyard in the morning, receives them into his service, protection, and pay, only upon their promise to be faithful and diligent in his work, before they have done any thing; I say, when these men have loitered away the day without working, why should he not reward them at night, because they then also profess themselves very sorry that they did not work, and make a great many promises and vows, that if they were to begin the day again they would? A promise of faithfulness and diligence was reason enough why he should take them into his service; but their sorrow for not working, and their resolutions of working, when the time of working is past, is no reason why they should be rewarded, or escape the punishment of loiterers.

This is the very case here: we are saved by the mercies of God, and the merits of Christ, which we partake of by our union to him; this union is made in baptism, which incorporates us into the body of Christ; and from the very first moment of our union we are in a state of grace and justification; our sins are washed away in his blood, as water purges all bodily defilements, and the Spirit of Christ dwells in us to renew and sanctify us. Now all that is required by God, or that seems in the nature of the thing necessary to this union, is a general repentance of all our sins, renouncing our former wicked course of life, professing our faith in Christ, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and vowing obedience to his laws: for this qualifies us to be his disciples, and to be received into his service, and into the communion

of his body and church ; and therefore this faith and repentance justifies in baptism, because those who thus repent of their sins, and believe in Christ, are received to baptism, and in baptism have all their sins forgiven, and are put in a state of grace and favour with God. But now, though faith and repentance, and the vows of obedience, are sufficient to make us the disciples of Christ, and to put us into a state of justification, yet they are not sufficient to save those who are the disciples of Christ without actual holiness and obedience of life: for to be a disciple of Christ does not signify merely to believe in him, and to vow obedience to him, but to obey him. It is reasonable enough, that upon our vows of obedience we should be received into his service, but it is not reasonable that we should be rewarded without performing our vows ; for it is as ridiculous a thing to think that our repeated sorrows for not obeying, and our repeated and fruitless resolutions of obeying our Saviour, should pass for obedience, as that the son should be thought to do his father's will, who said, " I go, Sir, but went not ;" especially, when after our vows at baptism we live a very ungodly life, and never think it time to repent, and to renew our vows again, till we come to die. If we consider the difference between what is necessary to make us the disciples of Christ and what is required of us when we are disciples, we shall see a plain reason why faith and repentance, as that signifies sorrow for sin, and vows of obedience, will justify in baptism, but will not be accepted upon a deathbed, and after a life spent

in wickedness: for when a baptized Christian comes to die, he is not then to be made a disciple of Christ, and to be baptized again, but to give an account of his life since he has been Christ's disciple; and mere faith in Christ, sorrow for sin, and vows of obedience, without actual holiness of life, though with the sacrament of baptism, it will make a disciple's account, especially when the sum-total of his life is nothing but sin and sorrow, and fruitless vows; for this is not that holiness of life which Christ requires of his disciples.

The ancient discipline of the church was a plain proof of this, that they thought a great deal more necessary for baptized Christians than was required to qualify men for baptism. In the apostles' days they baptized both Jews and Heathens immediately upon their profession of faith in Christ, and renouncing their former wicked lives; but in case they fell into any gross and scandalous sins after baptism, they were cast out of the communion of the church; and the profession of sorrow and repentance for their sins, and the most solemn vows of a new life, was not thought sufficient to restore them to the peace of the church; but they were kept under the severities of repentance till they had made satisfaction for the scandal they had given to the church, and given sufficient testimonies of the actual reformation of their lives. And in the ages succeeding the apostles, this state of penitents, in some cases, was continued many years; in other cases such sinners were never reconciled till the hour of death. Now, if they had thought, as many among us now do, that sorrow

for sin, and the vows of obedience, do immediately obtain our pardon from God for sins committed after baptism, it is not imaginable why they should have imposed such a long and severe discipline on penitents. If they believed God had forgiven them, why should not the church forgive them, and receive them to her communion again, upon their promises of amendment, without such a long trial of their reformation? But it is evident they thought sins after baptism not forgiven without actual reformation, and therefore would not receive them to communion again without a tried and visible reformation of their lives. We know what disputes there were about this matter in the primitive church: the ancient disciples allowed but of one repentance after baptism; and some would not allow of that in the case of adultery, murder, and idolatry, but denied the authority of the church to receive such sinners to communion again. This was the pretence of Novatus's schism; and Tertullian, after he turned Montanist, said many bitter things against the Catholics upon this argument, which seemeth to question the validity of repentance itself after baptism, though it did reform men's lives. But though this was a great deal too much, and did both lessen the grace of the gospel, and the authority which Christ hath given to his church, yet it is evident that all this time they were very far from thinking that some dying sorrows, or dying vows, after a wicked life, would carry men to heaven: and the judgment of those first and purest ages of the church ought at least to make men afraid of relying on such a

deathbed repentance as they thought very ineffectual to save sinners.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the fear of Death, and the remedies against it.

DEATH is commonly and very truly called the King of terrors, as being the most formidable thing to human nature. The love of life, and the natural principle of self-preservation, begets in all men a natural fear of dying. This is very much increased by a great fondness and passion for this world, which makes such men, especially when they are happy and prosperous, very unwilling to leave it; and this is still increased by a sense of guilt, and fear of punishment in the next world. All these are of a distinct nature, and require suitable remedies; and therefore I shall distinctly consider them.

1. The natural fear of death results from self-preservation, and the love of our own being: for "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun," *Ecc. xi. 7.* All men love life, and the necessary consequence of that is, to fear death; though this is rather a natural instinct than the effect of reason and discourse.

There are great and wise reasons why God should imprint this aversion of death on human

nature, because it obliges us to take care of ourselves, and to avoid every thing that will destroy or shorten our lives. This, in many cases, is a great principle of virtue, as it preserves us from all fatal and destructive vices; it is a great instrument of government, and makes men afraid of committing such villanies as the laws of their country have made capital. And, therefore, since the natural fear of death is of such great advantage to us, we must be contented with it, though it makes the thoughts of dying a little more uneasy; especially if we consider, that when this natural fear of death is not increased by other causes, (of which more presently), it may be conquered. The miseries and calamities of this life very often reconcile men to death, and make them passionately desire it; "Wherefore is light given to him that
" is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul? which
" long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for
" it more than for hidden treasures; which rejoice
" exceedingly, and are glad when they can find
" the grave," *Job* iii. 20, 21, 22. "My soul
" chuseth strangling, and death rather than life:
" I lothe it, I would not live alway; let me alone,
" for my days are vanity," *Job* vii. 15, 16. And if the sense of present sufferings can conquer the fears of death, there is no doubt but the hope of immortal life may do it also. For the fear of death is not an original and primitive passion, but results from the love of ourselves, from the love of our lives and of our own being; and therefore, when we can separate the fear of death from self-love, it is easily conquered. When men

are sensible that life is no kindness to them, but only serves to prolong their misery, they are so far from being afraid of death, that they court it; and were they as thoroughly convinced, that when they die death will translate them to a more happy life, it would be as easy a thing to put off these bodies as to change their clothes, or to leave an old and ruinous house for a more beautiful and convenient habitation.

If we set aside the natural aversion, and inquire into the reasons of this natural fear of death, we can think but of these two: Either men are afraid that when they die they shall cease to be, or at least they know not what they shall be, and are unwilling to change this present life, which they like very well, for they know not what. But now both these reasons of fear are taken away by the revelation of the gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light: and when the reasons of our fears are gone, such an unaccountable aversion and reluctance to death signifies little more than to make us patient of living, rather than unwilling to die; for a man who has such a new glorious world, such a happy immortal life in his view, could not very contentedly delay his removal thither, were ~~not~~ death in the way, which he naturally startles at, and draws back from, though his reason sees nothing frightful or terrible in it.

The plain and short account of this matter is this: we must not expect wholly to conquer our natural aversion to death; St Paul himself did not desire "to be unclothed, but clothed upon,

“ that mortality might be swallowed up of life,”
2 Cor. iii. 4. Were there not some remaining aversions to death mixed with our hopes and desires of immortality, martyrdom itself, except the patient enduring the shame and tortures of it, would be no virtue. But though this natural aversion to death cannot be wholly conquered, it may be extremely lessened, and brought next to nothing, by the certain belief and expectation of a glorious immortality; and the only way to arm ourselves against these natural fears of dying is to confirm ourselves in this belief, that death does not put an end to us; that our souls shall survive in a state of bliss and happiness when our bodies shall rot in their graves; and that these mortal bodies themselves shall, at the sound of the last trumpet, arise again out of the dust immortal and glorious. A man who believes and expects this can have no reason to be afraid of death; nay, he has great reason not to fear death: and that will reconcile him to the thoughts of it, though he tremble a little under the weakness and aversions of Nature.

2. Besides the natural aversions to death, most men have contracted a great fondness and passion for this world, and that makes them so unwilling to leave it: whatever glorious things they hear of another world, they see what is to be had in this, and they like it so well that they do not expect to mend themselves, but, if they were at their choice, would stay where they are: and this is a double death to them, to be snatched away from their admired enjoyments, and to leave whatever they love and delight in behind them. And there

is no remedy that I know of for these men to cure their fears of death, but only to rectify their mistaken opinion of things, to open their eyes to see the vanity of this world, and the brighter and more dazzling glories of the next.

There are different degrees of this, and therefore this remedy must be differently applied. Some men are wholly sunk in flesh and sense, and have no taste at all of rational and manly pleasures, much less of those which are purely intellectual and divine; they are slaves to their lusts, lay no restraint on their brutish appetites; the world is their God, and they dote on the riches, and pleasures, and honours of it, as the only real and substantial goods. Now, these men have great reason to be afraid of death; for when they go out of this world, they will find nothing that belongs to this world in the next; and thus their happiness and their lives must end together. It is fitting they should fear death; for if the fear of death will not cure their fondness for this world nothing else can. You must not expect to persuade them that the next world is a happier place than this; but the best way is to set before them the terrors of the next world, those lakes of fire and brimstone prepared for the devil and his angels; to ask them our Saviour's question, "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and to lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" These men ought to fear on, till the fear of death cures their vicious passion and fondness for this world; and then the fear of death will by degrees cure itself.

Others there are who have a true reverence for God, and govern their inclinations and passions to the things of this world with regard to his laws; they will not raise an estate by injustice, oppression, or perjury; they will not transgress the rules of sobriety and modesty in the use of sensual pleasures; they will not purchase the honours and preferments of this world at the price of their souls; but yet they love this world very well, and are extremely delighted in the enjoyments of it; and having a plentiful fortune, or a thriving trade, or the favour of their prince, they live at ease, and think this world a very pleasant place, and are ready to cry, "It is good for us to be here." Now, it cannot be avoided but that, in proportion to men's love of this world, though it be not an immoral and irregular passion, they will be more afraid, and more unwilling to leave it. When we are in the full enjoyment of an earthly felicity, it is difficult for very good men to have such a strong and vigorous sense of the next world as to make them willing and contented to leave this; they desire to go to heaven, but they are not over hasty in their desires; they can be better pleased, if God sees fit, to stay here a little longer; and when they find themselves a-going, are apt to cast back their eyes upon this world, as those who are loath to part. This makes it so necessary for God to exercise even good men with afflictions and sufferings, to wean them from this world, which is a scene of misery, and to raise their hearts to heaven, where true and unmixed happiness dwells.

The only way then to cure this fear of death, is to mortify all remains of love and affection for this world; to withdraw ourselves as much as may be from the conversation of it; to use it very sparingly, and with great indifference; to supply the wants of nature, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of it; to have our conversation in heaven; to meditate on the glories of that blessed place; to live in this world upon the hopes of unseen things; to accustom ourselves to the work and to the pleasures of heaven; to praise and adore the great Maker and Redeemer of the world; to mingle ourselves with the heavenly choir, and possess our very fancies and imaginations with the glory and happiness of seeing God and the blessed Jesus, of dwelling in his immediate presence, of conversing with saints and angels. This is to live like strangers in this world, and like citizens of heaven; and then it will be as easy to us to leave this world for heaven as it is for a traveller to leave a foreign country to return home. This is the height and perfection of Christian virtues; it is our mortifying the flesh with its affections and lusts; it is our dying to this world, and living to God; and when we are dead to this world, the fear of dying and living this world is over: for what shall a man do in this world who is dead to it? When we are alive to God, nothing can be so desirable as to go to him; for here we live to God only by faith and hope, but that is the proper place for this divine life where God dwells: so that, in short, a life of faith, as it is our victory over this world, so it is our victory over death too:

it disarms it of all its fears and terrors ; it raises our hearts so much above this world, that they are very well pleased to get rid of these bodies which keep them here, and to leave them in the grave, in hopes of a blessed resurrection.

3. The most tormenting fears of death are owing to a sense of guilt, which, indeed, are rather a fear of judgment than of death, or a fear of death as it sends us to judgment. And here we must distinguish between three sorts of men, whose cases are very different ; *1st*, Those who are very good men, who have made it the care of their lives to please God, and to save their souls. *2^{dly}*, Those who have lived very ungodly lives, and are now awakened, by the approaches of death, to see an angry and provoked Judge, and an injured Saviour, and a righteous tribunal ; and think they hear that fatal doom and sentence pronounced on them by their own consciences, “ Go, ye cursed, into “ everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his “ angels.” *3^{dly}*, Those who are doubtful of their own condition, and are apt to fear the worst.

1st, As to the first sort of these men, who have sincerely endeavoured to please God, and have the testimony of their consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity they have had their conversation in this world, Christ has delivered them from all their fears by his death upon the cross, and his intercession for them at the right hand of God. The best men dare not stand the trial of strict and impartial justice ; they are conscious to themselves of so many sins, of such great imperfections and defects, that their only hope is in the

mercy of God, through the merits and mediation of Christ; and in this hope they can triumph over death, as St Paul does; "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55.—57.; who destroyed sin, and plucked out the sting of death, by his death upon the cross; who triumphed over death by his resurrection from the dead, and is invested with power to raise all his true disciples from the dead; "is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25.

This is the happy state of good men when they come to die; they can look into the other world without terror; where they see, not a court of justice, but a throne of grace; where they see a Father, not a judge, a Saviour who died for them, and has redeemed them with his own blood. What a blessed calm and serenity possesses their souls! nay, what joy and triumph transports them! "how do their souls magnify the Lord, and their spirits rejoice in God their Saviour!" when they see him ready to pronounce them blessed, and to set the crown upon their heads? "Who would not die the death of the righteous, and desire that his latter end may be like his?" what wise man would not live the life of the righteous, "that his latter end may be like his?" that in the agonies of death, and in the very jaws of the grave, no disturbed thoughts may discom-

pose him, no guilty fears distract him; but he may go out of the world with all the joyful prefaces of eternal rest and peace?

2dly, As for wicked men, who never concerned themselves with the thoughts of God and another world while they were in health, many times a dangerous sickness, which gives them a nearer view of death and judgment, awakens their consciences, and overwhelms them with the unsupportable terrors of future vengeance; when they begin to lament their ill-spent lives, to tremble before the just and righteous Judge, whom they have provoked by repeated villanies, whose being they formerly denied, or whose power and justice they defied: now they cry passionately to Christ for mercy, and will needs have him to be their Saviour, though they would not own him for their Lord, nor submit to his laws and government: now these men are mighty earnest for comfort; the minister, who was the subject of their drollery before, is sent for in great haste, and it is expected from him that he should lull their consciences asleep, and send them quietly into another world to receive their doom there.

Now it is very fitting to let these men know while they are well, that there is no comfort to be had when they come to die: "for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:" and no man who knows them can speak peace to them, without making a new gospel, or corrupting the old one.

What I have already discoursed concerning a deathbed repentance, is a plain proof of

this: but though we set aside all that, and proceed upon the common principle, that a true penitent, whenever he sincerely repents, though it be upon his deathbed, after a long life of wickedness, shall be pardoned and rewarded by God; yet upon these principles it is impossible that a wicked man, when he comes to die, should have any comfort, without a vain and enthusiastic presumption; and the reason is very plain, because it is impossible either for himself or others to judge whether his repentance be true and sincere; such a repentance as, if he was to live longer, would reform his life, and bring forth the fruits of an universal righteousness: and it is agreed on all hands that no other repentance but this can be accepted by God. Now it is absolutely impossible, without a revelation, for any man to know this, who begins his repentance upon a deathbed; he may feel indeed the bitter pangs and agonies of sorrow, and may be sincerely and heartily sorry that he has sinned: and this every dying sinner is who is sorrowful; he is sincerely sorrowful; that is, he does not counterfeit a sorrow, but really feels it: and I know nothing else to make sorrow sincere, but that it is real and not counterfeited; and therefore to be sorrowful, and to be sincerely sorrowful, is the same thing. And will any man say, that whoever is sorry for his sins when he comes to die shall be saved? Then no sinner can be damned who does not die an atheist, or stupid and distracted, or suddenly without any warning: for it is impossible for a sinner, who is in his wits, and believes that wicked men shall be eternally

punished in the next world, not to feel an amazing remorse and sorrow of mind when he sees himself just a-falling into hell.

A dying sorrow, then, though it may be sharp and severe, almost to the degree of amazement and distraction, (and it is hard if such a sorrow be not real and sincere), is not saving repentance; and therefore, though sinners may feel themselves very heartily sorrowful, this does not prove them to be true penitents: and yet this is only the evidence they can have of their repentance, and the only thing they can rely on, that they are sure their sorrow is very sincere; and I doubt not but it is; for all true sorrow is sincere: but sinners who are very sorry for their sins may be damned.

Since then sorrow for sin is the only evidence such men can have of the sincerity of their repentance, let us consider whether the mere dying sorrows of sinners be any evidence at all of this, or what kind of evidence it is.

True repentance does at least include a change of mind, a turning from our sins to God, a deep sense of the evil of sin, and an abhorrence of ourselves for it: a great reverence for God, and for his laws, as well as a dread of his judgments, and a deliberate and serious resolution of changing our course of life, and for the time to come of living to God, and to the purposes of his glory; never to return to our old sins again, but diligently to exercise ourselves in all the duties and offices of a Christian life.

Now suppose a man who has lived wickedly all his life should be thus changed in a moment. and

prove such a true penitent as I have now described; and that God, who knows the hearts of men, sees that his promises and vows are sincere, and that if he were to live any longer he would be a good man, and therefore will pardon and reward him, not according to what he has done, but according to what he foresees he would have done had he lived any longer; (which is to judge men, not according to their works, but according to his own foreknowledge, which the scripture never makes the rule of future judgment :) I say, suppose such men may be true penitents, and pardoned by God, who knows that they are so, yet they can never have the comfort of it before they die, because it is impossible for them to know it.

When men see themselves a-dying, they are very sorrowful for their sins; so they say; but the most likely account of it is, that they are very sorry that they are a-going to hell, as a malefactor is very sorrowful when he is going to the gibbet. This may be the whole of their sorrow, and it is impossible to prove that there should be any thing more in it, and extremely improbable that there is: for what likelihood is there that men, who yesterday were very much in love with their sins, and as little thought of falling out with them as they did of their dying day, should to-day, as soon as ever they were arrested with a threatening sickness, be penitents in good earnest, and abhor their sins in a minute, and be quite other men upon the view of the other world? This is the case of all sinners when they come to die; which makes it very suspicious that there is nothing ex-

traordinary in it, no miraculous power of the divine Spirit to change their hearts in a moment, and make them new men, but only the common effect of a great fear, which makes men sorry for their sins when they come to suffer for them.

Now, if such dying finners can never be sure that their sorrow for sin is any thing more than a great fright, they can be sure of nothing else; for such a sorrow as this will counterfeit all the other acts of repentance. Men who are terribly afraid of punishment, are not only sorry for their sins, but this very sorrow makes them ashamed of them, gives them a great indignation against themselves for them, makes them flatter their judge, and vow and promise reformation, if they could escape this one time. And this is so very common and familiar, that in all other cases no man regards it. A judge, a father, or a master, will not spare upon such promises as these; and why should this be thought any thing more in a dying sinner than in other malefactors? why should that be thought a sufficient reason for God to pardon, which we ourselves think no reason in all other cases? All this may be no more than the fear of hell, and I doubt the mere fear of hell, when men are dying, though it may imitate all the scenes of repentance, will not keep them out of hell. It is so very probable that this is the whole of a deathbed repentance, that no such dying sinner can have any reasonable hope that he does truly repent; and therefore, unless he flatters himself when he dies with a false and counterfeit repentance, as he did while he lived

with the hopes of repenting before he died, he must expire in all the terrors and agonies of guilty fears. This is so miserable a condition, that though we should suppose such a sinner may be a true penitent, and go to heaven at last, yet no wise man would endure those dying agonies for all the false and deceitful pleasures of sin: and yet there is no possible way of avoiding this but by such a timely repentance while we are well, and death at a distance, as may bring forth the actual fruits of holiness, that, when we come to die, we may have some better evidence of the sincerity of our repentance than mere dying sorrow.

3. Let us now consider the case of those who are doubtful what their condition is; who are neither so good as to be out of all danger and fear, nor so bad as to be out of hope. And I need not tell any man that this is a state between hope and fear, which is a very uneasy state when eternal happiness or misery is the matter of the doubt. This is the case of those men who, after all their good resolutions, are ever and anon conquered by temptations; who, as soon as their tears are dried up for their last fall, fall again, and then lament their sins, and resolve again; and, while they are thus interchangeably sinning, repenting, and resolving, before they have got a lasting victory, or are arrived to a steady virtue, are summoned by death to judgment; or those who have a reverence for God, but are not so constant and frequent in their devotions; or if they abstain from gross and scandalous vices, yet they have not a due government of their passions, or do very little

good in the world, &c. Here is such a mixture of good and evil, that it is hard to know which is predominant: while such men are in health, they are very uneasy, and know not what to judge of themselves: but they fall into much greater perplexities when they are alarmed with the near approaches of death and judgment. And what a deplorable state is this, when we are dying, to be uncertain and anxious what will become of us to eternity?

Now, there is no possible way to prevent these fears when we come to die, but by giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by living such holy and innocent lives, that our consciences may not condemn us, and then we shall have confidence towards God, 1 *John* iii 20, 21.

But this is such a remedy as few of these men like: they would be glad to be sure of heaven, but yet would go as near hell as they can, without danger of falling into it; they will serve God, but must reserve a little favour and indulgence to their lusts; tho' they dare not take full draughts of sensual pleasures, yet they must be sipping now and then, as often as they can pacify their consciences, and get rid of the fear of God, and of another world: and therefore they are very inquisitive after other cures for an accusing and condemning conscience; are mighty fond of such marks and signs of grace as will secure them of heaven without the severities of mortification, or the constant and uniform practice of an universal righteousness. And a great many such signs have been invented, which, like strong opiates, assuage

their pain and smart, till their conscience awake, when it is too late, in the next world.

For all this is cheat and delusion, as St John assures us: " Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother," 1 John iii. 7. 8. 9. 10. This is the only sure evidence for heaven; and therefore every sin men commit makes their state doubtful, and this must fill them with perplexities and fears. Men may cheat themselves with vain hopes and imaginations when they come to die; but nothing can be a solid foundation for peace and security but an universal righteousness.

THE CONCLUSION.

FOR the conclusion of this discourse, I shall only observe, in a few words, that it must be the business of our whole lives to prepare for death; our accounts must be always ready, because we know not how soon we may be called to give an account of our stewardship: we must be always upon our watch, as not knowing what hour our Lord will come. A good man, who has taken all his life to please God, has little more to do, when he sees death approaching, than to take leave of his friends, to bless his children, to support and comfort himself with the hopes of immortal life, and a glorious resurrection, and to resign up his spirit into the hands of God and his Saviour: his lamp is full of oil, and always burning, though it may need a little trimming when the bridegroom comes: some few acts of faith and hope, and such devout passions as are proper to be exercised at our leaving the world, and going to God. But when the bridegroom is at the door, it is too late, with the foolish virgins, to buy oil for our lamps. Unless we be ready, when the bridegroom comes, to enter in with him to the marriage, the door will be shut against us: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh," *Matt. xxv. 1, &c.*

Some men talk of preparing for death, as if it were a thing that could be done in two or three days, and that the proper time of doing it were a little before they die; but I know no other preparation for death but living well: and thus we must every day prepare for death, and then we shall be well prepared when death comes; that is, we shall be able to give a good account of our lives, and of the improvement of our talents: and he who can do this is well prepared to die, and to go to judgment; but he who has spent all his days wickedly, whatever care he may take when he comes to die to prepare himself for it, it is certain he can never prepare a good account of his past life, and all his other preparations are little worth.

T H E E N D.



